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MY QUEEN



A LOVER'S QUARREL
OR MARION MARLOWE'S DECEITFUL FRIEND
BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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A LOVER'S QUARREL;

OR,

Marion Marlowe's Deceitful Friend.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHANCE INFORMATION.

"Oh, Mrs. Burnside! Isn't it wonderful how many things can happen in a short space of time? Just think! Only one little month ago the Temple Theatrical Company was charming the natives of our Western cities and to-day here we are, stranded high and dry in a New York hotel, with utter ruin and desolation staring in our faces!"

"For goodness' sake, Miss Ellis, what do you mean? I never heard such extraordinary language! Who says that desolation is staring us in the face? Oh, I guess I understand! You are gazing at yourself in the mirror this minute, and you do look desolate, upon my soul!"

Miss Ellis laughed, but it was a feeble effort, and the very next moment she was almost crying.

"I can't help feeling so, Mrs. Burnside,"

she went on, nervously. "Why, you and I are all that is left intact out of the whole 'push,' you might say! Mr. Temple is on the road with another company; Ida Inez is way off in Chicago with that blessed boy, Jackets; little Ruby is in the convent, bless her dear little heart, and oh, worst of all, Alma has gone and got married, and Marion has become an heiress and is in love, desperately in love, with Dr. Brookes, while Bert my own darling sweetheart, is preparing for that hateful old college!"

"And that is the secret of the whole trouble, isn't it, dear?" asked Mrs. Burnside, sympathetically, as she dropped her work and went over beside her companion.

"It is just because Bert has to go to college that you are so miserable. Why, you wicked girl, you wouldn't have him grow up a booby, would you?"

"What! Bert Jackson a booby! Well, I

like that!" cried the young girl, hotly, as she raised her head with a flash of spirit.

"I thought that would bring you to your senses," laughed Mrs. Burnside, as she went back to her chair. "All any one has to do to get you out of your mopes is just to roast your lover a little, but, seriously now, girlie, you must be sensible. You surely wish your husband to have an education!"

"Oh, yes, I suppose I do," was the dejected answer, "but just think of having to wait four years, perhaps, before we can be married! Oh, you must admit that it is abominably cruel!"

"I suppose it does seem so," murmured Mrs. Burnside, and, just then, the door flew open and a young woman with fluffy golden hair and a babyish face fairly bounced into their presence.

"I couldn't stop to rap, I was in such a hurry, and the chambermaid said you were in," she began, almost breathlessly. "Oh, what do you think has happened? My room has gone up in a blaze and I'm utterly ruined!"

She sank upon the sofa in an apparent state of collapse as she spoke, and, in less than a second, the two ladies were bending over her.

"Faith it's the truth she's tellin' yez," exclaimed the chambermaid, from the doorway. "An' it's the porter an' mesilf as put it out, bad cess to it! Come in an' look, if yez wants to see the rooins; sure, the firemen do be gone, as they wasn't needed at all, at all."

Miss Ellis followed the maid while Mrs. Burnside remained to comfort the hysterical girl, and they reached the door of the badly-scorched apartment she peered in curiously.

"I wonder how it happened. Did some one step on a match?" she asked, as she took a few cautious steps into the room.

The chambermaid was sniffing in a ward-

robe and did not answer her, and just at that second Miss Ellis saw something lying on the floor that made her face turn as white as a sheet, as she stared at it.

"What can it mean?" she whispered under her breath. "Why, I only introduced Bert to Miss Fredericks last week, and if there isn't a letter to her in his handwriting!"

She turned slowly from the room; she had seen enough. As she started down the hall she was doing a lot of thinking. The chambermaid closed and locked the door and went off about her work, but Miss Ellis still lingered outside of her own doorway, trying to get the upper hand of her indignation before she again confronted her fellow boarder.

Miss Fredericks had been a stranger to her until about two weeks ago, when they made each other's acquaintance in the dining-room of the hotel.

She was a jolly girl and seemed refined and ladylike. If she had not thought her new acquaintance a desirable person to know Miss Ellis would never have introduced her to her lover.

"It seems I was mistaken," she muttered, as she turned into an alcove in the corridor and stared blankly out of a window.

"It seems that she is a treacherous little minx, and that she is already trying to steal my lover."

She was so angry that even a call from Mrs. Burnside failed to arouse her, but a moment later, when a door was opened softly just across from where she was standing and a silvery voice spoke her name softly the clouds left her brow as if by magic, and she actually smiled as she responded promptly:

"Yes, Marion! I'm here! Do you want me, girlie?"

Marion Marlowe opened wide the door of the handsome suite which she was occupying in the hotel and made a mysterious sign, which bound Miss Ellis to silence.

"Yes, I do want you," she whispered, merrily, "and oh, Miss Ellis, I do hope you will like it! You see, I am invited to a masquerade ball, and it has just this minute come from the *modiste*!"

Miss Ellis forgot her troubles for a moment as the door closed behind her and her eyes fell upon an array of feminine articles, among which was a magnificent costume of rich purple velvet.

"You see, it is this way," went on Marion, still mysteriously; "my old patroness, Mrs. Parker-Stetson has invited me to this ball and, of course, I am anxious to look as nice as any one, but—dear me, Miss Ellis, what is the matter? You are as pale as a ghost! Has anything happened?"

Marion stopped short in her explanation to stare at her friend and the next moment poor Miss Ellis was sobbing on her shoulder.

"I'll never never have faith in any one again, Marion," she sobbed. "Oh, to think of Bert writing to a perfect stranger! He must have been infatuated with her at the very first glance, and that explains his coldness to me last evening! Oh, I will die of misery and madness, Marion!"

Marion bit her lips and her brow clouded with anxiety. She was almost too perplexed to know what to do for a minute.

"I'll just break with him at once, that is what I will do!" went on Miss Ellis, recklessly. "I will show him that I am not to be played with that way! The idea of his daring to write letters to that horrid Miss Fredericks!"

Her anger had about spent itself, but Marion was beginning to understand and, as Miss Ellis sank upon the sofa, the young girl sat down beside her.

"Now tell me exactly what has happened, dearie," she began, a little sternly. "I can't have you abusing my friend, Bert Jackson, and I'm sure you don't mean to, either, only

you are very angry. Bert is the loveliest fellow, next to one, that I ever knew and you can't make me believe that he has written to Miss Fredericks."

"But I saw it," gasped Miss Ellis, who was sobbing bitterly. "There was a fire in her room and she came running into ours. When I went in to look at the wreck, I saw a part of the letter. It was lying on the floor all scorched and blackened, and it is Bert's handwriting and has his own signature, Marion!"

"You must be mistaken," began Marion, and, just then, Miss Fredericks herself tapped on the door. She had recovered from her nervousness and was actually smiling.

CHAPTER II.

AN OVERHEARD CONVERSATION.

"I suppose Miss Ellis has told you!" she began, immediately. "I'm burned out, Miss Marlowe! Haven't a thing left but my jewels! I felt awfully at first, but I guess it doesn't much matter. I'll just be obliged to replenish my entire wardrobe, and there are two or three gowns that I am dying to have, so now is my opportunity to get them!"

She tossed her head airily as she spoke, and her voice was so jolly that both of the young girls stared at her in surprise for a moment. There was a bitter retort upon the lips of Miss Ellis, but Marion managed to give her a warning look and then turned to Miss Fredericks with her usual pleasant manner.

"I am very sorry if you have lost much, Miss Fredericks; but isn't it strange that I did not even smell smoke? The fire discipline in this hotel must be very nearly perfect."

"Oh, it was only the curtains and draperies that caught," explained the young lady. "My gowns are ruined by smoke mostly, although some of them are scorched, but, dear me! what a beautiful robe! Is it yours, Miss Mar-

lowe? Do put it on! You must look exquisite in it!"

She went forward as she spoke and picked up the velvet waist, her eyes taking in every detail of its style with wonderful quickness.

Miss Ellis was still having hard work to control her tongue, so Marion rose promptly and exhibited the costume.

"It is to wear at the masquerade ball at Mrs. Parker-Stetson's," she said, very pleasantly. "I don't know that I just like it; still, it is very pretty."

Miss Fredericks was holding up the waist, but she dropped it in sheer surprise.

"Why, Miss Marlowe! Is it possible that you go to Mrs. Stetson's? Why, she is a society leader, the very Queen of the Exclusives!" she cried, excitedly.

"And I am a *protégée* of hers," said Marion, simply. "She introduced me as her friend into the exclusive circle."

"What luck!" cried the young girl, with an envious glance. "Do you know, it has been the dream of my life to get into society! Do tell me, Miss Marlowe, how did you manage it?"

Miss Ellis could not restrain herself a minute longer and, as Marion hesitated, she blurted out, angrily:

"Marion does not have to 'manage' such things, Miss Fredericks. She was born a lady, and Mrs. Stetson is her friend. Besides that, Marion is an heiress and she is engaged to be married to a gentleman who belongs to that 'Exclusive Circle,' and he is to be her escort at the masquerade ball, so you see, she has three claims upon society. She does not need to 'manage!'"

Marion tried to stop her, but Miss Ellis would not be balked. The floodgates of her speech were always opened when any one spoke slightly of Marion.

"Perhaps you did not know that Marion refused to marry a real, live duke last sea-

son," she went on, recklessly. "Well she did, and the society girls were just green with envy! Oh, we actresses are not such a despised lot, after all! There are people in the world who respect as well as admire us! We are not nonentities, by any means, are we, Marion?"

Marion was folding the velvet costume and putting it back in its box and Miss Fredericks spoke again before she could answer.

"Is your lover one of the 'exclusives,' too, Miss Ellis?" she asked, sweetly, "or is he just a common-place plebeian, like your humble servant?"

Miss Ellis flushed proudly and raised her head a little higher.

"Alberto Jackson Canfield is the son of a railroad president, who is also vice-president of a bank and a millionaire," she said, loftily. "He is invited to all the social functions, and I guess he is just about as nice as any one he meets in the drawing-rooms on Fifth avenue. I have never been with him on these occasions, for, of course, we have only been engaged a little while, and people don't know yet that they are in duty bound to invite his sweetheart. Of course, I am only a soubrette. I don't 'cut any ice' at all, but I know my lover well enough to know that he would never accept an invitation that did not include me. In fact, Bert would never do anything dishonorable unless he was inveigled into it by some unprincipled woman!"

To save herself Miss Ellis could not keep back that thrust, but she was amazed to see that Miss Fredericks did not even change color, her face, which was as innocent as a baby's, looked, if anything, more smiling than ever.

"What a model young man he must be, and how I envy you," she said, merrily. "Poor me! I never had so much as an ordinary

lover! I have to depend on a crusty old uncle for everything, so there is not much chance of my getting into society."

"But you have beautiful clothes and you live expensively," ventured Marion.

Miss Fredericks tilted her head and her lips parted slightly.

"Oh, I can manage him all right, only it is very tiresome," she said, indifferently. "I'd be glad to get married and be done with him for good, but I must run along now and look at my new room. I do hope it will be handsomer and larger than the other."

There was a peculiar light in her eyes as she spoke which Marion could not quite understand, but, as the ealler moved toward the door, she did not detain her.

"I can't understand her a little bit," said Miss Ellis, disgustedly, as the door closed. "She looks as innocent as a cherub, and yet there's that letter! I'm as sure it was from Bert as I am that I am living!"

"Don't worry about it, dearie. You have only to ask Bert when he comes," said Marion, "but what did you mean by saying he was 'cold' last evening?"

Miss Ellis blushed and her eyes fell beneath Marion's gaze.

"I guess I was mad when I said that, Marion," she admitted. "Bert was loving enough, but he was just a little queer in his manner. I was mean to say that he was cold when I meant that he was only quiet."

"So Miss Fredericks longs to enter society," said Marion, after a minute. "Did you see the eagerness in her eyes when she said that, girlie? Really, it is the only thing I ever heard her say that impressed me as being serious."

"She's just dying to cut a dash; I can see it all over her," was the answer, as Miss Ellis rose and started for the door.

"Did you like the costume?" asked Marion, absently; "because I don't quite like it now

that I have had it made, and it cost a lot of money, too; but, of course, I must wear fine things when I go to Mrs. Stetson's!"

"I should say so, especially as you can well afford it! You will look sweet in it, Marion, and the doctor will fall in love with you all over again," was the answer; then Miss Ellis paused with her hand upon the doorknob and looked back at her friend with an appealing expression. "And you think Bert is innocent, don't you, Marion? You think I am mistaken about that letter?"

"I think Bert will tell you the truth," said Marion, earnestly, "so I don't advise you to borrow trouble."

Miss Ellis slowly turned the knob and closed the door behind her. As she reached the hall she suddenly thought of something.

"I think I'll run down to the parlor and see if that book is still on the table," she whispered to herself. "I must do something to distract my thoughts, and I was really interested in that story."

It was a small hotel and very quiet and, as she entered the parlor, there was no one in sight, but the sound of low voices issued from a curtained alcove.

"Oh, I am perfectly wretched, Mr. Jackson, really I am," came in wailing accents from the lips of Miss Fredericks.

"Just think, I have lost every garment that I had in the world, and just at a time when my uncle is far away, so that it is absolutely impossible for me to get any more money."

Miss Ellis held her breath and stood perfectly still for a minute; then her own affianced lover's voice answered the mournful statement.

"It's a deuced shame and I'm all-fired sorry for you! But don't you worry a little bit—we'll fix it all right. I'll just give you a lift myself for immediate necessities then——"

Miss Ellis waited no longer, but darted from the parlor. She was too excited to control herself a minute longer.

CHAPTER III.

THE INNOCENCE OF MISS FREDERICKS.

Miss Ellis dashed back into Marion's room like a perfect whirlwind. She was as white as a sheet and nearly speechless from anger.

"Oh, Marion! Marion! He is false, after all! He is as treacherous as she is! Oh, what shall I do, Marion?"

She dropped upon the bed and her frame shook with agony.

Marion was so astounded that she could not move for a minute.

"It's all over between us, Marion! Bert is a deceiver!" went on the poor girl, brokenly. "In spite of all his declarations of affection, he is as base and wicked as he can be! Oh, Marion, I do believe it will kill me! He is false! false! false! And I loved him, Marion!"

Marion found her voice at last and went over to her friend. As she bent over her, she put both hands on her shoulders and shook her.

"Lena Ellis, you must be crazy!" she said, severely. "What in the world has happened now? Tell me this minute!" Miss Ellis sprang to her feet and faced her with flashing eyes.

"It is no use, your trying to protect him!" she cried, chokingly. "He is a traitor, and oh, how I hate him, Marion! Go down in the parlor yourself if you don't believe me!"

Marion did not wait a minute, but started for the door. There was a look upon her face that meant that she was in earnest.

Half way down the corridor she met Miss Fredericks and, for just a second, she stared at her in amazement.

"Well, of all things," she whispered, under her breath, as the young lady hurried past, "her cheeks are actually tear-stained, and yet she is laughing."

She hurried on to the parlor and, just as she reached it, she discovered Bert walking

slowly to the door, but he came back at once as the young girl called to him.

"Bert, what does this mean?" she asked, sharply, as they entered the deserted parlor. "Why are you here in this hotel without seeing Lena?"

Bert shrugged his shoulders and gave a curious laugh, but he knew Marion well enough to realize that he must answer.

"My dear Marion, I came here to see her, but I saw Miss Fredericks instead. Now I am going out to get my luncheon, after which I fully intend paying my respects to my sweetheart."

Marion stared at him a minute, but she could see nothing wrong in Bert's expression, and, while she was thinking deeply, the young man continued:

"See here, Marion, I may as well tell you what is in my mind. You know Lena and I can't be married for four years; now, don't you think it is mean of me to bind her to her engagement when, perhaps, she might have a chance to do better?"

Marion's eyes opened if possible a trifle wider, but she was still too perplexed to think of answering.

"It isn't just a square deal for a fellow to tie a girl down that way," added Bert, soberly, and was about to continue when Marion interrupted him.

"Bert, what do you mean?" she gasped. "What in the world has come over you to make you talk so strangely?"

Bert shrugged his shoulders again, and there was a peculiar light in his eyes which Marion was far too distressed to notice.

"I've been thinking it over," he went on, "and I've decided to give Lena her liberty. You know she goes on the road the first of May, anyhow."

"But what has that got to do with your promise, Bert?" gasped Marion, again. "Oh,

Bert! I can't make you out! What has come over you?"

The young man turned half way round and passed his hand over his face, but, once more, the young girl was too confused to understand the gesture.

"Bert, you surely don't mean that you have lost your love for her, do you?" she whispered, breathlessly. "Why, you can't, and be honorable! Don't you know you can't? The poor girl loves you, and it would kill her to lose you! Oh, Bert! Bert! You are so changed! I cannot understand you!"

The tears had sprung to Marion's eyes and Bert's face was flushing, but he steadily avoided looking squarely at her.

"There's no use reproaching me, Marion," he said, a little remorsefully. "I ain't saying a word about my own feelings. I'm just doing what I think a gentleman should do, under the circumstances. I'm offering Miss Ellis back her freedom from our engagement."

"Well, you are very wrong to do it, and I will never forgive you!" cried Marion, hotly, as she turned on her heel. "I never expected such an act from you, Bert! A gentleman does not offer his *fiancée* her liberty until she desires it!"

Bert bit his lips, but did not reply and Marion walked quickly from the room without looking behind her.

"Poor, dear Marion! She doesn't understand," he muttered, after she had gone. "Gee whiz! As if I would ever have given my darling up if I hadn't been told that she regretted our engagement."

He waited a minute until he could compose his features and then walked slowly across the lobby and out to the pavement.

Ten steps from the hotel a plaintive voice called to him and Bert turned to confront Miss Fredericks, who was arrayed in some peculiar garments.

"I borrowed them of the chambermaid," she said, as she joined him. "I hope you won't mind walking with me a few steps, in spite of my looking so hideous?"

"Is it possible that you have nothing left?" asked Bert, in genuine dismay.

Miss Fredericks shook her head and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"Not a thing that is fit to wear, and no likelihood of getting anything. I have just ten dollars left and my uncle is in Italy."

"Great Scott! That's rough! But how about your board?" asked Bert, sympathetically. "Will the hotel people let you live there until they hear from your uncle?"

Miss Fredericks coughed slightly in order to repress a smile, but her answer came with some reluctance.

"Oh, yes—I suppose so! Uncle's credit is good," she said, slowly, "but, of course, I shall be subjected to great annoyance. I am used to having money in my pocket, you know, Mr. Jackson."

She sighed heavily as she spoke, and Bert gave her a quick glance. She was such a confiding little creature that he could not help pitying her.

"Hold on! We'll take a cab!" he said, with a sudden inspiration. "There's an empty one on the corner—come on, Miss Fredericks."

A smile of triumph shot across the young girl's babyish face, and the next moment Bert was seating himself by her side in a comfortable carriage.

"There, little girl, there's a hundred dollars," he said, in a low voice, as soon as they were rolling along. "Now, I'll just leave you at one of the big stores and you can buy what gimcracks you really need. I'd give you more, but it's all I've got at present."

"Oh, you dear, sweet fellow! How good you are!" sighed Miss Fredericks, with a glance of adoration; then she put her hand upon his and dropped her lids shyly.

"Can you really afford to give me this, Mr. Jackson? I would not take it for the world if I thought you couldn't."

"Don't you worry a bit," was Bert's prompt reply. "I've got a couple of thousand dollars stowed away in dad's bank, so I won't go to the poorhouse for the want of a hundred."

"How perfectly lovely for you! And oh, Mr. Jackson, I just love you for your kindness to poor little me!" whispered the girl, softly; then the pressure upon Bert's hand increased a little.

"It seems marvelous to me that Miss Ellis should wish to give you up. Really, I could not believe it, if she had not told me so herself," she murmured, softly.

"And I would never have believed it if she had not written me that note," was Bert's answer. "But you saw her with it, you swore to that, Miss Fredericks!"

He turned and looked down into the upturned face and his brow darkened with the pain that he was suffering, but concealing.

There was not a quiver of the eyelids as Miss Fredericks replied:

"She wrote it in my room and at my table, Mr. Jackson! You certainly do not think me capable of lying about it."

Her lips quivered as she spoke and her voice trembled a little, and in an instant Bert was reproaching himself for the question.

"Of course I don't, you poor little innocent! It was her handwriting all right and, of course, she wrote it. It is strange, that is all; I can't understand it."

A moment later the cab drew up at the store and, with a courteous farewell, Bert left her to do her shopping.

CHAPTER IV.

A SURPRISE.

"Marion!"

"Yes, dear."

"When are you going to begin purchasing your trousseau? I am just dying to help you select some of the pretty things!"

Mrs. Burnside was seated in her own apartment when she spoke and Marion was sitting near her with a book between her fingers.

The young girl blushed prettily, but she replied at once.

"I am just waiting to hear from the doctor's mother," she said, anxiously. "She has something to communicate to me which I think I already know, but it is Reginald's wish that I let her tell me."

"I hope it is nothing that will delay the happy event," said Mrs. Burnside, anxiously, "for I am as eager as the doctor is to have you married, dearie."

There was another blush, then Marion's face became very grave and she laid the book softly upon the table.

"It is about his father's will, I am sure," she said, slowly. "You know, his father did not wish him to marry beneath him."

"As if he was!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnside, contemptuously. "The doctor is the noblest man on earth and you are the noblest woman; therefore, it stands to reason that you were made for each other."

Marion's brow was still clouded and she did not reply, so, after a brief moment of silence, her friend deftly changed the subject.

"Have you seen Miss Fredericks to-day?" she asked, in an altered voice.

"No, I have not; why do you ask, Mrs. Burnside?"

As Marion spoke, she looked up quickly. She was just thinking of the girl at that minute.

"Simply for this reason," continued Mrs. Burnside, with an anxious frown. "I passed her in the hall to-day and she had a very vulgar-looking woman with her. I thought Miss Fredericks was a lady, didn't you, Marion?"

The young girl pursed up her lips, but did not reply for a minute. She was wondering

if she was at liberty to tell all that Miss Ellis had told her.

"I don't mean that I think she is ultra-refined," went on Mrs. Burnside, quickly; "but I did think she was respectable and honest and all that sort of thing, but there are rumors flying in the air about her. Every one is wondering where she gets her money."

Marion's cheeks grew pale, but she set her lips determinedly. She had decided not to tell quite all that she was thinking. Since the day of the fire, which was now nearly a week past, Bert had been seen in the parlor of the hotel repeatedly with Miss Fredericks and, after what Miss Ellis had told her of that conversation behind the curtain, she could easily account for Miss Fredericks' affluence. It had been a terrible grief to Marion to think that Bert was so foolish, for she had always loved the boy exactly like a brother.

That Miss Fredericks had infatuated him made his sin no less black, and, after that short interview in the parlor, Marion had steadily refused to see him.

As for Miss Ellis, she had refused positively to even look at her lover, and, at present, she had fled for refuge to Marion's sister, Dollie.

Marion was thinking hard while Mrs. Burnside talked and, as the lady was deeply interested in her subject, she did not notice the young girl's manner.

"Of course, one must not heed rumors, at least, one must not always believe them," she continued, slowly, "but, now that Bert and Miss Ellis have quarreled over, Heaven only knows what, I can't help thinking a lot about Miss Fredericks. I wonder if she could have had anything to do with it."

Marion bit her lips, but she knew that she must answer, and a second later her friend was staring at her.

"I have thought the same thing," Marion admitted, finally; "she looks innocent enough,

but one can never tell. If I thought she had wronged Lena, I believe I would hate her, but how is one to find out, Mrs. Burnside?"

"I am sure I don't know," began the lady, when a boy tapped upon the door and handed a card to Marion.

The moment the young girl's eyes rested upon the name her cheeks flushed prettily and a light flashed into her eyes that made them shine like diamonds.

"It is easy to guess who your caller is," laughed Mrs. Burnside. "Ask the doctor to come right up here—it will be lots more cozy than the parlor."

The boy departed and Marion turned to her friend gratefully.

"It is so kind of you to think of our comfort, dear Mrs. Burnside, I do so hate that stiff old parlor. It makes me feel as if I was at a prayer meeting or a funeral."

"Yes, a chair with prim little legs and a straight, stiff back is the most uncomfortable thing that was ever invented," remarked her friend. "I just pity the lovers who have to sit on such chairs! It's a wonder the fount of their affection doesn't freeze up solid! It would take a phenomenon of a lover to make love in a hotel parlor."

"Oh, but we don't make love now! Our love is all made," laughed Marion, merrily. "We merely recapitulate the old, old story, and it sounds sweeter every time, if you will believe it."

"I ought to know! I was engaged for five years before I was married, and saw my lover every night," was the answer, "and then, oh, Marion, we were married lovers for five years more, and when he died—but I cannot talk about that. I just pray and pray that you may never know my sorrow!"

The gentle eyes were full of tears and Marion's arms were around her in an instant, and the young girl's head nestled lovingly on the motherly shoulder.

"It would kill me to lose my lover or my husband; I am sure it would," she murmured, softly. "I could never be brave and serene like you! I should just weep and weep and make every one about me miserable."

"No you wouldn't, Marion. You would be far braver than I. Your nature is braver," was the decided answer.

"Poor Miss Ellis! How she must be suffering!" sighed Marion, quickly. "She loves Bert dearly, and yet he has given her up. My blood boils with indignation whenever I think of it!"

"And I am mystified by it all," said Mrs. Burnside, solemnly. "I can't believe that Bert is so unworthy! Why, I would just as soon have expected it of the doctor."

She turned to the door as she spoke and admitted Dr. Brookes, giving him a cordial hand grasp and a smile of greeting.

"Do not judge Bert too hastily," said the young man, as he took Marion in his arms. "I overheard your last words, you see, Mrs. Burnside."

"Oh, we are trying so hard not to misjudge him!" cried Marion, whose lips were burning from her lover's caress. "But he told me himself, so what can I think! He assured me in plain words that he was giving her back her liberty."

The doctor looked puzzled, but, as he seated himself upon a sofa, he did not forget to draw Marion down beside him.

"I'll be back in a minute. Do please excuse me," said Mrs. Burnside, in a second. "I just want to run into Miss Fredericks' room. I loaned her a pattern and she has forgotten to return it."

"A nice chaperone you are!" laughed Marion, gayly, but Mrs. Burnside had vanished out of sight and hearing.

"Marion, darling, you are worrying, I can see it," said the doctor, quickly. "You are fretting because of poor Miss Ellis!

I can't have that, dearest; my sweetheart must not worry!"

"I can't help feeling just a little badly, Reginald," whispered the young girl, as she nestled her head against his shoulder. "But I am happy, darling. Don't think I am not happy! Every hour of my life is a perfect paradise!"

"And all because of your love for one who is all unworthy," murmured the doctor, softly. "Oh, Marion, my queen, would that I were the Prince of Perfection instead of only a common, ordinary being!"

"You are my prince, Reginald," whispered the sweet lips, "and I would not wish you to be perfect. You would be so very, very lonely if you were perfect, darling!"

"I would have one lovely companion, sweetheart," was the rapturous answer, and then, as Mrs. Burnside's step was heard in the hall, he pressed her to his heart for one brief instant.

"Well, I didn't get the pattern, but I got something else!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnside, almost angrily. "Now, what do you think that Bert Jackson has done? He has actually invited her to the masquerade ball at Mrs. Stetson's! Why, the boy must be mad to make such a fearful blunder!"

Marion sprang to her feet, too astonished to answer, but Dr. Brookes was prompt to speak his sentiments.

"I don't believe a word of it, Mrs. Burnside! Why, Bert knows better than to make a break like that! Just fancy his introducing Miss Fredericks at the Parker-Stetsons!"

CHAPTER V.

A CALLER.

There was just a moment of silence after the doctor's exclamation; then Marion spoke with a sternness that was most unusual.

"Bert shall not make such a blunder as

that! I must find a way to prevent his doing it!"

"I will speak to him to-night," said the doctor, quickly. "The boy has been avoiding me of late and I could not understand it. I supposed this misunderstanding with his sweetheart was just a lovers' quarrel, and, of course, I did not wish to interfere, but I shall certainly speak to Bert about this other matter. I can't have him 'queering' himself socially by such an error."

"I can't understand it! She must have bewitched him," said Marion, frowning. "I blamed Bert for dreaming of giving Lena up, but I am simply disgusted at his attentions to Miss Fredericks! It is shameful to think of her taking his money!"

The secret was out at last, for Marion had forgotten her caution in her anxiety, but now, as her friends were staring at her questioningly, she had to give an explanation.

"Of course, it may all be guesswork," she said, as she finished, "but Miss Ellis was positive that it was Bert's voice that she heard, and I saw them both not twenty feet from the parlor about five minutes after, and Bert told me in plain language that he had seen Miss Fredericks and then told me that he was going to give Lena back her freedom."

"Did he do it, that you know of?" asked Dr. Brookes, anxiously. "Is there any proof that he did really offer her her freedom?"

Marion's eyes flew open and she caught her breath excitedly.

"Not that I know of, Reginald," she said, after a minute. "Lena saw that letter in Miss Fredericks' room and overheard them talking in the parlor. As far as I know, that is all she learned; for the first thing she did was to fly off to Dollie's."

"Then it looks as though Bert were only talking," said the doctor, solemnly. "If he did not write or ask Lena to end the engage-

ment, and if you did not tell her what Bert told you——"

"I did not! Not a word!" broke in Marion, eagerly. "I only implored her to see him, and she wouldn't do it!"

"Then there's treachery somewhere, and no doubt about it," finished the doctor, stoutly. "I shall broach the subject to Bert this very evening."

Marion shook her head, for she remembered Bert's words. He had seemed very decided that day in the parlor.

"I think I will go now, dearest," continued the young man. "I have three patients to call upon and then I must 'phone to Bert. I hope I shall find that he is disengaged this evening."

"I hope so, too," began Marion, when another rap interrupted them. This time it was the boy with a message for the doctor.

"There's a gentleman in the parlor who wants you, sir," he said, politely. "He said if you wasn't here to leave his card with Miss Marlowe."

He held out the card as he spoke and the doctor took it; then, without a word, he passed it to Marion.

"I had better go to him in the parlor at once, I think," he said, wonderingly. "My caller is Captain Hobart-Canfield, Bert's father."

"Yes, go at once, but do let me know if he wishes to see me," cried Marion. "Dear Captain Canfield! I would be so pleased to see him!"

"I don't know whether I just like that, sweetheart," laughed the doctor, merrily. "I am not so sure I fancy your affection for the captain."

Marion kissed her fingers to him with a merry smile, and the next moment the young man had quitted the apartment.

"Now, I'll tell you what I heard in Miss

Fredericks' room," said Mrs. Burnside, the minute they were alone.

"That woman was in there—her name is Miss McGillin—and oh, Marion, Miss Fredericks is choosing her costume for the ball! I caught a glimpse of a black robe embroidered in gold butterflies and a purple velvet exactly like yours, in spite of the fact that she tried to hide them."

"But what did you hear?" asked Marion, eagerly. "Was it anything about Bert or Lena, Mrs. Burnside?"

"No, only Miss Fredericks said to me, 'Don't you envy me, Mrs. Burnside? I am going to the Parker-Stetson ball with young Mr. Jackson.'"

"What did you say?" whispered Marion, as her friend paused and stared at her.

"I did not say a word, Marion. I just asked for my pattern. Really, I was too disgusted to speak. I believe I could have spanked Bert at that moment!"

Marion shook her head dolefully as she took up her book. There was no use trying to read, so she turned the pages listlessly.

"Your lover is just the dearest, noblest fellow in the world, Marion," went on Mrs. Burnside, "and yet, a week ago, I would have qualified that remark. I would have said he was one of the noblest and that Bert Jackson was the other."

"Oh, I can't believe any ill of Bert," cried Marion, suddenly, throwing down the book. "In spite of his own words, I cannot believe ill of him. He must have some good reason for his actions, Mrs. Burnside."

"Well, whatever it is, he is keeping it to himself," was the answer. "I would as soon have expected my own little Ruby to do an unscrupulous deed. I always thought Bert was the soul of honor."

"And he is! I am sure of it!" cried Marion, stoutly. "Oh, Mrs. Burnside! I did wrong. I should have been more pa-

tient with Bert. I should have seen him again and tried to persuade him."

"Perhaps you ought to have done so, Marion, but it isn't too late," was the thoughtful answer.

"The misunderstanding between them is not a week old. I guess a truce could be patched up," she added, smiling. "Then I'll begin it this minute by writing to Bert. I'll go straight to my room and write him a nice letter and tell him that, in spite of what he said, I still believe him a gentleman of honor. Then I'll beg him to come and see me just as soon as he can, and I will not say a word about that other matter until—well, until he has seen Lena again. Oh, I should have thought of all this before. I am wretchedly stupid."

She started for the door and had her hand upon the knob. As she opened it, she came face to face with another liveried bell-boy.

"Please, Miss Marlowe, you are wanted in the parlor," he said, politely.

Marion reopened the door and glanced over her shoulder.

"I'll have to postpone my letter for a few minutes, after all. Captain Canfield wishes to see me, so I am going to the parlor."

"Don't flirt with the old gentleman," called Mrs. Burnside, gayly. "I wouldn't like to be the girl to make Dr. Brookes jealous."

"Nor I," retorted Marion, with a merry laugh. "It is my aim in life to make him happy."

CHAPTER VI.

SHOCKING NEWS.

Marion was almost gay as she hurried to the parlor, for her heart was lighter over Bert's position now, and, besides, she was genuinely glad to see his father.

But what was her dismay upon glancing in at the door to see old Captain Canfield

pacing the floor excitedly, his handsome face as white as ashes.

Dr. Brookes sat near the window, with one elbow upon his knee and his head in his hand in a dejected attitude.

There was an awful pain at Marion's heart, but it was not her nature to hesitate in an emergency.

Softly closing the door behind her, she advanced to the captain's side and held out both hands to him in a mute gesture of greeting.

"Oh, here you are. How do you do, my dear?" exclaimed the old gentleman, gallantly, as he stooped and kissed the young girl's forehead. "I am sorry to distress you, Marion, but I think it best to tell you something, and, besides, we need your help. Isn't that so, doctor?"

He did not release the young girl's hand as he asked the question, so Dr. Brookes rose from his chair and went and stood beside them.

"Marion can help us a little, I think," he said, proudly. "It will not be her first trial at solving mysteries."

They were both so solemn that Marion paled with apprehension, but she forced herself to smile as she responded bravely:

"What is it? What can I do for you, Captain Canfield? I am sure I will do my best. You have only to ask me."

"I knew it, Marion. You are a dear, brave girl," was the captain's answer; then he drew three chairs up close together and seated her in one while he motioned the doctor to another.

Then something happened that Marion in her inexperience could not help but shudder over.

Captain Canfield drew three checks from his pocket and handed them to her.

"You know my son's writing," he said, in a husky voice. "Look at those checks, Miss Marlowe, and tell me if Bert wrote them."

Marion's hands trembled visibly as she took the checks, but she was thoroughly puzzled. She could not identify the writing. "I am almost sure it is his, and yet it is different," she said, after a minute. "Wait, Mr. Canfield, I have some notes of Bert's in my room. There was one that came only a week ago. I will bring it down and then we can compare it."

She darted from the room and the two gentlemen waited. Ten minutes later she returned with a look of bewilderment upon her features.

"They are gone! The notes are gone!" she whispered. "They were there in my desk not four days ago; now there isn't a letter or an envelope, even!"

Captain Canfield put the checks back in his pocket and rose from his chair. There was a look upon his face that startled Marion.

"These checks amount to three thousand dollars," he said, slowly. "The first two were cashed without a word, but, when the third was presented, the paying-teller saw that Bert had overdrawn his account, and, of course, he very cleverly detained the bearer until he could send to my private office. I have always kept Bert well supplied with money, and he has never attempted to overdraw his account before. Whoever drew those checks must have known that he had money there, and the signature is so much like Bert's that it has nearly driven me crazy."

Marion found her voice after a moment of agony.

"What did you do, sir, when you saw the check, the one that was overdrawn, I mean?" she asked, breathlessly.

The old gentleman drew himself up with unconscious pride.

"Drew my own check in Bert's favor and deposited it to cover the difference, then told

the paying-teller to honor the check," he said, distinctly.

There was another silence, but Marion was too eager to know more to restrain herself long.

"Who cashed the checks?" she asked, in a whisper.

The captain's answer was brief. He said simply:

"A woman!"

There was another silence, in which Marion could hear her own heart beat, but it was not her nature to jump at conclusions, nor would she willingly accuse an innocent person even in her thoughts, if she could avoid it.

"I had her followed, of course," went on the captain, slowly, "but I am sorry to say she eluded the detective. Now the question is, who are Bert's associates? I thought I knew them all, but it seems I am mistaken."

Marion glanced at Dr. Brookes, but his eyes were bent upon the floor, so she made a heroic attempt to turn the conversation into another channel.

"Did you show him the checks, sir?" she asked, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes, and he was quite as much surprised as I was," was the answer. "Bert was not lying when he said he knew nothing about them."

The young girl's lips were white and her heart beat painfully. She was so sorry for the captain that she could have cried from very sympathy.

"Bert may be foolish, but he will never be wicked," went on the old gentleman, quietly. "Thank God, he inherits his mother's gentle nature. I do not blame the boy, but I do pity him sincerely, for it is my opinion that he has been lured into bad company."

Marion sprang to her feet with flashing eyes.

"It must be that, sir. Some one has deceived him," she said, hotly. "I have known Bert all his life, and he is the soul of honor. Oh, I feel sure he has been made a victim, but by whom, Captain Canfield?"

"Exactly what I mean to find out," said the old gentleman, grimly, "and I did hope, Marion, that you could give me some information."

The young girl bit her lips and glanced

again at the doctor, but the physician was still staring at the floor in a non-committal manner.

"If I could, I certainly would," she managed to say, honestly, "but it would not be right to do any guessing, sir! What I do not know for sure, I cannot even mention!"

"That is right, Marion!" said the captain, holding out his hand, "and I will not ask you to even furnish a suspicion if you do not wish to. My detectives will ferret the matter out, in all probability, but naturally, I am impatient to catch the culprit."

"And we will help you, sir," said the doctor, rising. "Both Marion and I have vague suspicions in our brains, but, as she says, we must not speak them until we can justify ourselves in doing so, but you may depend upon our vigilance. We shall watch and work eagerly."

"I believe it, and I thank you for your sympathy," was the courtly answer; then the captain said good-by and shook their hands cordially.

Marion stood in the corridor as the two gentlemen went away, for the doctor decided to remain with Bert's father until some definite form of action could be decided upon.

"Don't betray your thoughts, darling," he whispered, as he said good-by, "and expect me again at seven-thirty this evening."

Marion's roguish eyes looked up into his as she answered:

"Mrs. Burnside says I betray my thoughts when I am thinking of you. Have you any objections to my doing that, Reginald?"

A smile passed between them and then Marion darted back up the stairs. She was in haste to confide in her friend, Mrs. Burnside.

With her hand upon the knob of the door, she suddenly thought of something and then, without a moment's hesitation, she retraced her steps, only turning the corner of the corridor at the top of the stairs and going straight toward the apartment which was now occupied by Miss Fredericks.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS FREDERICKS.

Miss Fredericks was seated at a low work table sewing diligently upon a waist of pur-

ple velvet as Marion entered, but she seemed highly pleased to see her visitor.

"Do sit down and talk to me," she said, gayly, as she moved a chair toward Marion and then went on with her work, after a brief apology.

"You see, it's my costume for the ball," she said, with childish gayety. "I'm making it exactly like yours, Miss Marlowe. I knew you wouldn't mind, you are so good-natured."

Marion bit her lips, but she could not afford to be offended. She had come in from a sense of duty to study this girl. It was due to both Bert and herself that she should not misjudge her.

"Do you like this room better than the other?" she tried to ask, pleasantly, thus changing the subject. "It seems to be better furnished and is ever so much larger."

"I like the two exits," was the young woman's somewhat extraordinary reply. "You see there is a hall upon each side and I can go out either way. When I own a palace I shall have a thousand exits."

Marion's eyes flew open. She could not quite understand her, but Miss Fredericks only laughed merrily as she saw her expression.

"Oh, I'm a creature of the wildest fancies," she went on, gayly. "I just live in day dreams and air castles, Miss Marlowe, and now my loveliest dream is about to be realized! I am actually going to be introduced into society."

Marion controlled her voice by a wonderful effort and looked the young woman squarely in the face as she asked a question:

"Is it true that Bert Jackson is to be there to introduce you? Mrs. Burnside told me, but I could hardly believe her."

"And why not, Miss Marlowe?" asked Miss Fredericks, opening her blue eyes very wide. "Why shouldn't Mr. Jackson take me to the ball if he wishes?"

"Only that his allegiance lies elsewhere," answered Marion, slowly. "Bert is engaged to be married to Miss Lena Ellis."

A merry peal of laughter broke from the young woman's lips and her eyes filled with tears of amusement.

"As if that made any difference!" she ex-

claimed, lightly. "Why, my dear Miss Marlowe, engagements are like bubbles; you make them in thoughtless moments and explode them at pleasure, or they explode themselves, which is the case in this instance."

She looked so innocent as she spoke that Marion could hardly believe her senses, but Miss Fredericks went on talking, as though there was nothing unusual in her sentiments.

"I guess Mr. Jackson liked Miss Ellis once," she said, demurely, as she examined her work critically, "but, dear me, how could she expect it to last forever! Doesn't she know enough about men to know that they are all fickle?"

She rose as she spoke and selected a bit of silk from a roll in her dressing-case drawer and, as she seated herself again, she gave a furtive glance toward her wardrobe. Marion's glance followed hers, but did not linger an instant, for the young woman continued her remarks, and her face attracted her like a magnet.

"I've seen a lot of men and I know them. root and branch," went on the babyish lips again. "I've met dozens and dozens of them and they have all made love to me, but—will you believe it, Miss Marlowe, they were only a host of deceivers! I am twenty-four and I have never had a lover."

"I am sure I am sorry for you," began Marion, a little hesitatingly; then, once more, her glance wandered involuntarily toward the wardrobe, and this time she kept her eyes upon it fixedly.

"But I don't need sympathy now," broke in Miss Fredericks, who had not happened to look up. "I have a lover now—Mr. Jackson is my lover. Of course, I feel sorry for the old sweetheart, Miss Marlowe, but the poor little goose will have to learn by experience,—every one has to, you know, so it will not hurt her."

The wardrobe door moved a little as Marion was about to reply, but the young girl kept her wits about her and went right on talking.

"I should hate to believe all that you say about men, Miss Fredericks," she said, calmly. "I have met a good many men, too, but they were nearly all of them lovely, just

the noblest and best fellows that you could ever imagine!"

"Dear me, and you are not married yet!" cried Miss Fredericks, with another glance toward the wardrobe. "Why, how in the world did you ever resist them!"

Marion was looking straight at her now, but she was growing uneasy, for she was confident that there was some one listening to their conversation.

"They must be awfully cramped," she thought, as the truth flashed across her mind; then she suddenly made a fresh discovery.

"Why, you are packing up, aren't you, Miss Fredericks?" she exclaimed, almost involuntarily. "I just noticed your trunk this minute. Are you thinking of leaving?"

Miss Fredericks glanced over her shoulder at a half-filled trunk; then her face became a trifle pinker as she answered carelessly:

"It's all I have left—all the clothes, I mean. Some way, I don't like to trust to the wardrobe since that horrid fire! You know my gowns were all ruined, and they were hanging in the wardrobe,"

"But you have new ones," began Marion, and then bit her lips. She did not know how far to go with this curious young woman.

"Only this. I had to have this," was the answer, as Miss Fredericks held up the purple velvet. "And, dear me, what a time I had getting it, Miss Marlowe. Why, I had to pawn nearly all of my jewels to pay for it."

There was another slight movement of the wardrobe door and Miss Fredericks uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"Oh, Miss Marlowe, do tell me if I am doing this right!" she said, fretfully. "I can't seem to remember how that collar is put on, and I do so want my gown to be perfect. Would it be asking too much to ask you to show me yours, just the waist, you know, if it isn't too much trouble."

"It is no trouble at all," said Marion, rising hastily. "I'll get it at once and you can copy it."

She opened the door as she spoke and Miss Fredericks rose also. There was a decided creak of the wardrobe door as Marion left the apartment.

She hurried to her room and began busy-

ing the box that held her costume; then it suddenly occurred to her to do a little thinking.

Five minutes passed before she could make up her mind what course to pursue; then, with the waist in her hand, she went back to Miss Frederick's apartment.

Not a sound answered her light tap and the young girl stared in amazement. She tapped again, louder than before, but still no one responded. Then she tried the door, but it was locked.

"Well, if that isn't queer," she whispered, turning back to her room. "I don't believe she wanted the waist at all. She just asked me to get it in order to get rid of me."

CHAPTER VIII.

A CLEW.

"A note from the doctor, Marion," called Mrs. Burnside, opening the door just as the young girl once more replaced the waist in the box and tied the cover down securely.

In an instant her bewilderment and chagrin were forgotten and Marion took the envelope and opened it eagerly.

A cry of delight issued from her lips as she read; then she motioned her friend to a seat upon the sofa and immediately sat down beside her.

"Listen to this, Mrs. Burnside," she said, in a low voice, "Reginald has called upon Lena and he says she was furious over Bert's behavior, until he told her about the checks, and now she is heart-broken. She says she'll forgive him anything, if only he will prove himself innocent."

"Good gracious, Marion Marlowe! What do you mean?" gasped Mrs. Burnside. "What has Bert Jackson done, I'd like to know, except shown himself to be a bit silly over a woman?"

"Oh, I forgot that you did not know," answered Marion, as she told her the story; then the two sat for a moment and looked blankly at each other.

Mrs. Burnside found her voice at last, but her words were very guarded.

"How stupid of that detective to lose sight of the woman who cashed the check," she said, slowly. "Why, if we had her de-

description we could tell in a minute. There isn't another woman in the world who looks like Miss Fredericks."

"Then you think it was she?" broke in Marion, quickly. "Oh, Mrs. Burnside, she is so young and so innocent-looking! I thought of her, of course, but it does not seem possible!"

Mrs. Burnside pursed up her lips and half closed her eyes. She had seen young "innocents" before. Still, she did not wish to misjudge her.

"I'll write and ask Captain Canfield to get me a description of her at once," said Marion, suddenly.

"I wish you would. It would relieve my mind considerably," was the honest answer. "Really, Marion, I can't help feeling that Miss Fredericks is guilty, and yet there isn't a ghost of evidence why I should think so."

"Except that she has money, which no one seems to be able to account for," said Marion, slowly; "but she told me not ten minutes ago that she had pawned nearly all of her jewels, so that may explain it all, may it not, Mrs. Burnside?"

"It certainly is good evidence," was the smiling answer; then the lady rose and went over to a small writing-desk of quartered oak which stood in the corner.

"That is a wonderfully pretty desk. What a pity it is marred," she said, absently. "Come, Marion, let's try and get this unpleasant thought out of our heads. We must not accuse any one of anything until we know them to be guilty; so, now, with your permission, I'll write a letter to my baby! That is the easiest way I know of obliterating all disagreeable thoughts from my heart and gray matter."

She laughed as she spoke, but Marion's eyes were serious. She had risen as her friend spoke and was examining her desk carefully.

"Some one has forced the lock on that desk!" she said, after a second. "There was not a scratch on it when I took this apartment. That explains how I have lost all of Bert's notes and letters!"

Once more Mrs. Burnside stared at her

questioningly, and Marion was obliged to make another explanation.

"I always lock the desk when I go out in the evening, and some one has forced the lock. That is as plain as day. It looks as if it had been done with a penknife."

"Or a pair of scissors," said Mrs. Burnside, quickly. "See, Marion, there is where one of the points stuck in while they were prying with the other."

Marion examined it critically and then tried the key. It worked all right, for the lock had not been broken and was as good as ever.

"It is one of those little, cheap locks. You can open them with a hairpin," said Mrs. Burnside, disgustedly. "It is a pity that any one should deface the desk when they could have picked the lock easily if they had only known it."

"Probably did not wish to waste time," said Marion, scornfully; "but who in the world is interested in my letters? The only ones I have missed are Bert's old missives!"

"It's a curious coincidence, and it may be a clue. It's a pity we are not detectives," said Mrs. Burnside, smiling.

Marion stood for a moment trying to think out the problem, while Mrs. Burnside seated herself at the desk and began her letter to little Ruby.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Burnside, for interrupting, but do you know what I am going to do?" asked Marion, suddenly. "I am going on the warpath to find those scissors. They were very thin and very sharp—of that I am certain."

As she spoke, Marion's eyes had been searching the desk; the next second she caught her breath and bent eagerly forward.

"See! Mrs. Burnside!" she said, as she pointed to a tiny bright speck imbedded in the wood about an eighth of an inch from the plate. "The point broke in the wood! Oh, now I am sure I can identify them!"

"Don't touch it!" cried Mrs. Burnside, as Marion attempted to pick it out. "Leave it where it is, girlic, and go and find your scissors! When you can put the two together you will have completed your chain of evidence!"

Marion glanced at the clock on the mantel, and then moved quickly toward the door.

"I'll just go to Miss Fredericks' door and try again," she said, quietly. "It is just possible she had stepped out or was in the bathroom. This time she shall let me in, if she is in the apartment!"

Mrs. Burnside smiled, but did not detain her; she was already deeply interested in the letter which she was writing to her darling.

Marion walked swiftly down the hall, but her brain was in a tumult. She was so excited over the discovery that her desk had been opened that she had almost forgotten her usual calmness.

Suddenly she checked her speed and took herself sharply to task. She was in no condition to measure weapons with Miss Fredericks.

"I must be calm!" she whispered to herself. "So much depends upon this trifling detail. If she stole those letters, there must have been a motive, and what else could it be but to copy Bert's handwriting!"

She had made a shrewd guess, and her heart beat wildly. Oh, if she could only prove the culprit's guilt and establish Bert's innocence!

As she reached Miss Fredericks' door she tapped upon it lightly, then bent her head to listen for any sound in the apartment.

There was a rustle of skirts, and then the second door of the suite closed softly.

It flashed through her head what Miss Fredericks had said about "exits," but she had no time to withdraw, for the key was turning slowly. The next moment the door was opened and a coarse, vulgarly dressed woman stood before her, whom Marion knew instinctively must be Miss McGillin.

CHAPTER IX.

A PRISONER.

In an instant the young girl knew exactly what had happened. Miss Fredericks had taken "French leave," for some reason or other.

The trunk was still standing exactly as she had seen it, but there was not a trace of the purple velvet costume to be seen in the apartment.

For just a moment she was uncertain what course to pursue, and, as she stood hesitatingly upon the threshold, the occupant of the room spoke to her politely.

"Come in, miss, and take a chair. She'll be back in a minute."

But Marion only looked at her absently, for her brain was in a tumult. She was wondering what she ought to do, and how far she could believe this woman.

"Do come in, miss," entreated the woman, again, this time actually taking Marion by the arm to lead her forward.

"No, I will not wait," began Marion, who had come to her senses at last. "I can come in again later."

She turned to leave the room, but the woman was before her. In a second she had squeezed her coarse form between Marion and the door, and after turning the key in the lock, calmly extracted it and put it in her pocket.

"There, you little spy! Now I guess you'll stay!" she remarked with a coarse laugh. "You thought you were going to catch her, didn't you? Well, you'll have to be lots smarter than you are now before you catch that darling!"

Marion was pale with rage, but she was angry at herself principally. Why had she been so stupid as not to see through this woman?

For just a second she was tempted to fly at the woman and wrest the key from her grasp; then, as she realized her superior strength, she thought better of it.

There were a bottle and two glasses standing on the table, and, as Marion saw them, she suddenly thought of something. She would be crafty for once, in order to accomplish a justifiable purpose.

One thought flitted through her head before she could decide what to do, and that thought was simply that she was an excellent actress, and here was an opportunity to demonstrate her talent.

Of course she could scream and some one would let her out, but another glance at the bottle showed her a plan that was better.

Almost while the woman was speaking she smiled up into her face, and then, as Miss

McGillin uttered her vicious words, Marion actually laughed at her.

"Why, you don't have to lock me in to keep me, madam," she said, jovially. "I guess I can stay awhile and let you make my acquaintance, for you are very much mistaken if you think I am a spy, Miss McGillin."

"Then what do you call it?" asked the woman, more softly. "You are the third that has come to that door in the last hour, and two of them were detectives, if I am any guesser. But they didn't see me, you bet! I was in the wardrobe!"

She was chuckling as she spoke, and, as she sat down by the table, she raised the bottle in her hand and poured some of the contents into one of the glasses.

"How perfectly awful," said the young girl, calmly, as she seated herself upon one of the chairs. "And Miss Fredericks is such a sweet girl. Why, she must be horribly annoyed by it."

Miss McGillin took another drink and then offered the bottle to Marion.

"I guess you ain't a spy, after all," she said, with better nature; "but it's just as well to detain you for awhile; it will give Nora a chance to get to the depot."

"Why, is she going away?" asked Marion, innocently. "I thought she intended to remain until her uncle came for her."

Miss McGillin stared a moment, and then broke into a roar of laughter, after which she poured out another drink and gulped it down at a swallow.

"Did she tell you that? Wall, that's a good one, all right! Her uncle! By Jove, that's rich! So he's her uncle, is he?"

She was so much amused over the joke that Marion ventured to glance around the apartment, and at last she located the patent call which communicated with the office.

It was only a few feet away, but she hated to make a dash for it, for fear Miss McGillin would resort to personal violence to stop her.

"Have another bottle of that—that wine," she ventured, timidly. "I'll pay for it, if you will have it, Miss McGillin."

Her words were as genuine as she could possibly make them, and her expression must have been satisfactory, for, after a sharp

glance into her face, the woman greedily consented.

Marion fairly flew toward the electric register. She was afraid the woman would mistrust her and retract her statement.

She grasped the lever and drew it half way around. When it spoke in the office she had called for an officer.

Miss McGillin was watching her, but Marion's quickness had deceived her.

She half rose to her feet and then fell back upon her chair, for the liquor she had drank was slowly getting the best of her.

As Marion went back to the table she began to tremble violently. She was wondering what explanation she could give in the office for being imprisoned in Miss Fredericks' apartment.

A sharp rap upon the door made even Miss McGillin spring to her feet, but Marion held out her hand for the key and spoke with all the calmness she could muster.

"Which is it, whisky or wine, Miss McGillin?" she said, sweetly; "and shall I order a bottle of apollinaris water?"

The woman sank back upon her chair, for the young girl's acting was superb. In an instant she had fished the key from her pocket and handed it to her.

Marion reached the door with her limbs shaking beneath her, and her hand trembled so she could hardly unlock it.

The first person that met her gaze was the clerk of the hotel, whose face was clouded with anxiety as he peered into the apartment.

There was a man in citizen's dress, whom the young girl knew to be the house detective, behind him, but this individual did not look at Marion.

The instant the door was opened he glanced beyond and over her shoulder.

"What is it, Miss Marlowe?" asked the clerk, excitedly.

Marion did not speak, but pointed behind her to where Miss McGillin was slowly rising from the table.

"Let me in there a minute, Mr. Burnham," said the officer, at that instant; "I want a closer look at that woman yonder."

Marion stepped back a little and held the door wide open; then, for fully a minute,

the half-drunken woman and the detective stared silently at each other.

Then a scene followed that Marion will never forget, for the officer suddenly sprang at the woman and seized her by the shoulder.

The next moment he was actually tearing the gaudy clothes from her bulky body.

CHAPTER X.

A WOMAN'S TREACHERY.

"There! Now you look more like yourself, Barney McGillin!" he cried, a moment later.

Marion had covered her eyes when the scene began, but she uncovered them now and fairly gasped in astonishment.

Miss McGillin had vanished, and in her place stood a coarse-faced young man, while skirts and petticoats seemed to be scattered all over the apartment.

"It's lucky he's got such a jag on," went on the officer, chuckling. "Barney never could navigate when he had a drink or two aboard. We've nabbed you before, just for that reason, haven't we, you sinner?"

"Is it really a man?" gasped Marion, faintly; "and to think he locked me in here! Oh, isn't it awful, Mr. Burnham?"

McGillin had dropped back in his chair with a look of chagrin upon his features, for, as the officer said, he was too drunk to navigate, and as the clerk had closed the door, Marion told them what had happened.

She did not mention Miss Fredericks at all, only that she had heard the young woman close one door as her companion opened the other.

"Well, you've done us a good turn, and the public as well," said the officer, admiringly. "Barney has been out of jail exactly two months, and it's been eight uneasy weeks for the force, I can tell you."

"What's his forte?" asked the clerk, who was growing more composed, now that he saw there was no further danger of excitement.

"Ask me something easy," replied the officer, smiling. "Barney, here, is a crackajack at everything! He's got a dandy record!"

Marion caught her breath with a little

gasp; then she turned appealingly toward the speaker.

"You'll keep him safe, won't you?" she asked, hurriedly. "Oh, I wish I knew for sure whether he was guilty or not! Can't you arrest him, officer, as a suspicious person!"

"I think I can," began the officer, who had been watching his charge carefully; then he suddenly bent forward and stared closely at the fellow.

"Here! what's the matter, Barney? You're as white as a ghost!" he said, sharply. "You've got more than a jag on! Speak—quick, you spalpeen!"

McGillin's head was nodding slightly, and there was a dazed look in his eyes as he tried to answer.

The detective grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him vigorously, but the man only groaned and his head drooped even lower.

Suddenly the clerk sprang forward and picked up the nearly empty bottle.

As he shook it quietly he saw a little sediment in the bottom.

"Drugged, I'll bet! And by his own chum!" he muttered. "Well, if I was ever taken in, it was by the innocent face of that woman!"

Marion did not wait to hear any more, but fled from the apartment. She was too confused to either think or act for a moment.

Of all the strange occurrences that she had ever experienced this was one of the strangest, and it was imperative that she calm herself as rapidly as possible.

Mrs. Burnside had finished her letter and had gone, and Marion turned the key in her own door and threw herself upon the sofa.

She heard the clerk hurrying down the hall, and a few minutes later she heard him return with some one, whom she rightly guessed was a neighboring physician. It seemed incredible to her that Miss Fredericks could really be as wicked as she seemed, and, of all things, to think of her even drugging her companion!

"Such depths of degradation! such fearful cunning!" she whispered, sharply; "and to think that our Bert is in the toils of such a woman!"

This brought her back to her promise to Captain Canfield. She had assured him that she would keep a sharp watch for the culprit, and here, at the very outset, this "suspect" had escaped her.

She paced the floor of her room excitedly for a few minutes, and it was a great relief when the housekeeper came in to see her.

"Well, you did have an experience, you poor child," Mrs. Wells began, kindly; "but, thank goodness, we are rid of that disreputable pair! The officer has taken McGillin to the station-house and Miss Fredericks has vanished."

"But she must be found," burst out Marion; "for I fear there is a worse sin at her door, Mrs. Wells! But I am forgetting myself; I must not mention it!"

"Poor girl! Your nerves are all upset," said the woman, kindly. "I'll have your dinner sent up if you wish, Miss Marlowe. Why, I wouldn't blame you if you went all to pieces! I'm sure I should have flunked if I had witnessed such a scene. The very idea of his being a woman!"

Mrs. Wells was a trifle confused, but Marion did not correct her; she was too confused herself to much more than notice the error.

"And to think of her telling me she was going to that swell ball to-morrow night," went on the lady. "Why, she had a gorgeous gown of royal purple velvet, quite fit for a queen, and her cape was a beauty—a genuine robe of ermine!"

Marion smiled as she talked. She was too excited to do more, but after the good woman had left her she got to thinking it over.

She was still thinking deeply when a note came from Dollie, and, with a cry of delight, she tore it open.

"Miss Ellis has not heard a word from Bert, and she is almost crazy," wrote Dollie; "and, do you know, Marion, I think it is awful silly. Why, if they love each other, why don't they make up? I think such pride as theirs is downright abominable!"

"Poor Dollie! She doesn't know all!" whispered Marion, as she folded the letter. "My precious little sister is so happy in her own love that she doesn't stop to consider that other natures may differ."

She glanced in the mirror at herself as she spoke, for, in spite of the housekeeper's suggestion, she intended to go down to dinner, and it was time for her to begin her toilet.

"Yes, Dollie and I are happy in our loves," she repeated, softly. "She has a darling husband, and I have a darling lover! Oh, Bert! Bert! How foolish you are! Why don't you and Lena make up right away? You must do it, Bert—I will not have it any different!"

She shook her finger at Bert's picture, which stood upon the dressing-case, as she spoke, but for once the handsome features failed to smile back into her eyes.

It might be only imagination, but Bert looked as if he was almost weeping.

As soon as she had dressed, Marion penned a half dozen notes, which were dispatched by messenger before she went to her dinner.

To Captain Canfield she merely said that she had a clew; to Bert she told what she knew of Miss Fredericks' vulgar companion, and to Dr. Brookes she related her afternoon's experience in detail.

"Reginald will know what to do," she whispered, with a smile; "he always knows what is best for every one! Oh, I just think I have the wisest lover in creation!"

CHAPTER XI.

MARION'S WISH.

"Bert is the most obstinate young man that I ever met! Do you know, the boy had shut himself up in his room, Marion, and he would not see me, but begged me to excuse him."

Dr. Brookes was sitting by Marion's side as he spoke, and, as usual, Mrs. Burnside was acting as chaperone for the occasion.

"He must feel terribly over that affair of the checks," said Marion, softly. "I wrote him a long letter and sent it by messenger. I do hope it will cheer and console him a little."

"It ought to," murmured her lover, with a glance of admiration. "A letter from you ought to make any one happy, Marion."

"Oh, but others don't feel that way about me, you know, Reginald," said the young

girl, laughingly. "You know, we look through rose-colored spectacles when we look at each other; it is very doubtful if any one else can see our halos."

"I can see them, children; so they are visible," laughed Mrs. Burnside; "and you have no idea how I like to look at you! There is no sight so sweet to me as a glimpse of happy lovers!"

"I have always thought it so strange that there were people in the world who actually begrudged others their happiness," said Marion, slowly; "but, as Mrs. Burnside says, I think happiness is catching! I know I always feel happy when I see others enjoying themselves."

"That is the true spirit, Marion," answered the doctor, tenderly; "but now, darling, tell me what else you have done. Have you answered Dollie's letter, or written to Lena?"

Marion drew a deep sigh, but nodded her head eagerly.

"I sent them each a note by messenger," she said, quickly; "and, of course, I told Lena all about the disappearance of Miss Fredericks. Now, I do hope the poor girl won't get the idea that Bert has gone with her."

"I could dispel it if she did," said the doctor, looking at his watch. "Bert is closeted this minute with his father and the cashier of the bank. They are trying their best to get some clew to the forger."

"Do they suspect Miss Fredericks?" asked Marion, in a whisper. "I told Bert in my note about Barney McGillin. I didn't have the heart to tell his father."

"We spared Bert all we could, and I am glad you have spared his father," was the young man's answer. "Now, it is for Bert to furnish the information that we have not gained. It rests with him to clear Miss Fredericks."

"If I could only see him," said Marion, dolefully. "Really, I had no idea he was so proud. He has not even answered my letter of yesterday."

"He is deeply mortified, no doubt! Why, just think what a goose he has been!" cried Mrs. Burnside. "Bert was far too smart to be taken in by any one!"

"The best of us are foolish sometimes, and Miss Fredericks was really very pretty," remarked the doctor, smiling. "Now, if I had not been so deeply ensnared already, who knows but that I should have been captured by her graces. She might have been drawing on my bank account now, instead of on Jackson's!"

"Oh, don't accuse her, even in fun!" protested Marion, quickly. "Of course, it does

look as if she were guilty, but we must not admit it until it is proven."

"Dear me, what is all the racket about?" asked Mrs. Burnside, suddenly, as she moved toward the door. "This is such a quiet place usually, but do listen, Marion! It's the clerk and another man, and, yes, I believe there's a woman."

"I think I have had enough excitement for one day," said Marion, without rising. "Do bolt the door, Mrs. Burnside, and don't let it come in! Really, I'm not over that horrid scene yet! I don't care to witness another!"

"They say McGillin is either very sick or shamming, and he's as dumb as an oyster," remarked Dr. Brookes, who was sitting very erect and listening intently. "He's a precious rogue, who knows the value of silence; but he's very bitter toward Miss Fredericks for the trick she played on him."

"I should think he would be," remarked Mrs. Burnside, who was still near the door. "When rogues fall out, there must be some pretty hard feelings indulged, but, in spite of your wishes, Marion, I am going to investigate that racket. I verily believe we've been struck by lightning, or else they are running freight trains through the front of this building!"

She opened the door as she spoke and glanced out into the hall, and just at that moment the chambermaid called her.

"Faith, it's thim detectives, miss! They do be rippin' things east and west in them rooms," she explained, cautiously. "Sure, it's meself that is mystified by the little minx. Her face was that swate that it would desave a lawyer!"

Mrs. Burnside closed the door and locked it securely. Her curiosity was satisfied, and they were in no danger.

"Now, I'll make another effort to see Bert," remarked the doctor, rising; "and I will come for you, darling, at ten to-morrow evening. I do hope all this unpleasantness will be over, so that you will enjoy the dancing."

"If Bert would only go," murmured Marion, quickly; then a flush mantled her cheek as she thought of something. "Oh, Reginald, I do hope this will not get in the papers—about those checks, I mean! It would be so humiliating for Bert," she cried, excitedly.

Dr. Brookes shook his head.

"His father will attend to that, I am sure," he said, soberly; "and it is barely possible I can get him to go to the ball, if only to show that he did not escort Miss Fredericks!"

They all smiled sadly, and then the doctor took his leave, Mrs. Burnside promptly

turning her back so as not to witness the parting.

"And you will be dressed in royal purple, my queen," whispered the lover, rapturously. "You must tell me beforehand, you know, so I will be sure to know you!"

"As if I could wear a disguise that you could not penetrate, Reginald," murmured the young girl; then her eyes flashed a little as she added:

"No, dearest! I can't wear that gown now! I really can't! I mean to go out to-morrow and exchange it, if possible."

"You will be perfect in anything that you may choose, darling," whispered her lover; "for, under the mask will be your beautiful face, and under the silk and velvet will be the heart that loves me."

"Isn't he an angel?" murmured Marion, as the door closed after her lover. "Oh, Mrs. Burnside, is it wrong to be so supremely happy?"

Mrs. Burnside took her in her arms and laid the fair head upon her shoulder.

"If you do not deserve to be happy, no one does, Marion," she said, sweetly; "for, just think of all the horrors that you have passed through, and you have always been so brave and so loyal, darling!"

"I hope I do deserve to be happy," whispered the young girl, softly; "and, really, I sometimes think I have a right to be, for, oh! think of the months before I knew my own heart—before I even guessed that I was in love with Reginald!"

"Slowest love is sometimes the best," said Mrs. Burnside, soberly. "Alma is happily married, and hers was a second love. Now, if only Bert and Lena would see the error of their ways—but perhaps they will, Marion. We may see wonders performed to-morrow."

"I shall do all I can to perform them," said the young girl, bravely; "for I am so happy myself I can't bear to see any one else miserable. Oh, I wish every deserving girl and woman had a lover like my Reginald!"

CHAPTER XII.

A CLEVER ARREST.

At half-past ten the following night Marion entered the home of Mrs. Parker-Stetson and was greeted warmly, not only by the hostess herself, but by the servants in attendance.

They all remembered the beautiful girl, and were delighted to see her again; for she had won their hearts during her stay among them.

Marion's costume had been sent to the home of her hostess beforehand, for it was

Mrs. Stetson's wish that she should come early for a chat and don her masquerade costume after the other guests had assembled.

At midnight the parlors were nicely filled with a magnificent array of loveliness in costly costumes.

Mrs. Parker-Stetson was moving about in stately dignity, and at last the dance was on in all its glory.

It had been a hard day for Marion, for nothing definite had been accomplished, and she had not heard a word from either Bert or his father.

Dr. Brookes reported all the news that he could possibly learn, which was that the detectives were still searching for the woman who had cashed the checks, and Barney McGillin was still as "dumb as an oyster."

Not so much as a trace had been found of Miss Fredericks, and every effort was being made to pursue the case quietly in order that not a syllable of it should get into the papers.

Bert had not seen fit to call upon his sweetheart, so, of course poor Miss Ellis was as unhappy as ever, and, besides, she was overwhelmed with anxiety at Bert's dreadful position.

All this the doctor had learned from others, for, in spite of his frequent attempts to see Bert, he had not been successful, as the young man was helping the bank detectives in their search for the woman.

Marion had been obliged to wear the purple robe after all, for the costumer could furnish nothing at such short notice, and it was absolutely impossible to get another made for her.

As she descended the wide stairs to the ballroom more than one turned to stare at her, for, although her face was covered by a coquettish white veil, her form was actually regal in its dignity.

"You were born a queen, Marion!" whispered her lover in her ear, as he offered her his arm to lead her across the ballroom.

Marion blushed under her veil, and her heart beat wildly. She was as happy as she could be under the circumstances which surrounded her.

Glances and words of admiration followed her as she passed along, but no one knew her identity except her hostess and her escort, so the young girl could enjoy their praise with quiet satisfaction.

"Now, if Bert were only here," she whispered, as the doctor led her to a seat. "Oh, the costumes are gorgeous, and I do so wonder who they all are! Won't it be jolly, Reginald, when we unmask at dinner!"

The young man pressed her hand, but the lancers were forming, and the next instant

he whirled her away among the crowd of dancers.

"Quick—Marion! look!" whispered her lover, suddenly. "Do you see that young man in the doublet and hose? Watch him a minute, and then tell me if it isn't Bert! That boy can't deceive me! I am sure it is he, Marion!"

Marion peered through her veil and a sigh of happiness escaped her lips.

"It is Bert," she whispered, quickly. "Oh, take me to him, Reginald!"

Dr. Brookes was about to comply when a thought struck him.

"Let's have a little fun out of it, darling," he said, in a merry voice. "You know who he is, but he doesn't know you. I'll get Mrs. Stetson to introduce you as Queen Elizabeth—but do you think you can disguise your voice so that Bert will not know you?"

"I'll try," laughed Marion, who was bubbling over with fun, and, ten minutes later, Mrs. Stetson had obligingly made the introduction.

Marion could hardly help laughing out loud at Bert's manner when he greeted her. If she had really been Queen Elizabeth he would not have been more formal and dignified.

In an instant she discovered that he, too, was disguising his voice, so she strained every nerve to deceive him as completely as possible.

The moments passed, and still Bert stayed beside her. They danced, promenaded, and even sat together, and yet Bert did not unbend from his formal manner.

The strain was beginning to tell on Marion, for the young girl was eager to reveal her identity and ply Bert with questions about the things which were worrying her; but just as she opened her lips to speak in her natural voice, she saw Bert raise his hand quickly and signal to some one.

What could it mean?

Marion caught her breath with a gasp. The next second Bert had offered his arm to her and was leading her toward the conservatory.

"It is quiet in there, and I am sure you need a moment's rest, Your Majesty," he said, in a peculiarly strained voice.

Marion glanced over her shoulder, and her bewilderment increased.

Two men in evening dress, with grotesque masks on their faces, were quietly following them toward the conservatory.

Just as she reached the entrance of the dimly-lighted room it flashed into her mind exactly what had happened.

Bert knew nothing of her purple gown, but he had heard of the other, and the boy

had naturally taken her for that woman—Miss Fredericks!

A ripple of laughter burst involuntarily from her lips, and Bert stopped like one turned to stone and stared at her in amazement.

The conservatory was unoccupied except by themselves, and, as Marion carefully raised her veil, the two men who were following them removed their masks simultaneously.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" was the only sentiment that Bert could express; "if I haven't been doing my best to get you arrested, Marion!"

Another laugh bubbled from Marion's lips, but her eyes filled with tears as she cried, almost hysterically:

"You thought I was Miss Fredericks, didn't you, Bert? And all because she had the audacity to duplicate my costume!"

Bert did not answer; he was too chagrined, and, just for a moment, the two detectives stared at each other.

"Then this isn't the party?" said one of them, finally, in a low tone to Bert. "The real one has tricked you—is that so, Jackson?"

Bert nodded his head, but did not reply, and just at that second the crowd that was surging past the conservatory door became noisier and denser.

Marion had turned when she entered and was facing the door, and, as the detective spoke, she leaned forward a little.

Something that Mrs. Burnside had told her had flashed suddenly into her brain, and it took Marion but an instant to remember that the "something" referred to another costume which Miss Fredericks had selected, and which she had tried to hide from the eyes of every one.

"Oh, Bert! How could she get in here if you did not bring her?" she breathed, sharply. "Look, quick! Do you see that woman in black, with the gold butterflies all over her? I am almost sure that she is Miss Fredericks!"

Her voice was low and suppressed, but it vibrated with eagerness, and the detectives turned at once and followed the direction of her glances.

"It's not the woman we are looking for," said one of them, grimly. "She was large and coarse, and had a bulky figure. This woman is a mere baby in comparison with the other."

"You mean the one who cashed the checks," said Marion, impulsively. "Oh, but this is her accomplice! I am sure of it, gentlemen! See! she is moving on! Pray, don't let her escape you!"

"Marion is right! It is Miss Fredericks!" said Bert, under his breath. "Arrest her, men; but do it as slick as possible! There mustn't be a scene in Mrs. Stetson's parlor!"

"We'll manage that," said one of the officers, as he winked at his companion. "You be at the door, Dick, when I bring her out. She won't refuse a good-looking fellow like me when I ask for a glimpse of starlight."

The two moved on, while Bert and Marion stared at each other.

They had hardly come to their senses and returned to the gay throng when the woman with the gold butterflies embroidered upon her dress swept slowly by them upon the arm of the detective.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

"What a relief to know that she has been caught! I'll never trust an innocent face again—never!"

Mrs. Burnside made the remark to a group of people who were all crowding about Marion in the hotel parlor at eleven o'clock the next morning.

"And Lena says she'll never trust me again," exclaimed a happy voice, and Bert put his arm around his sweetheart as he made the statement.

"The idea of his believing that I wrote that note," retorted Miss Ellis, disgustedly, as she held up a piece of paper. "Just fancy my writing him that I wished to be released from my engagement! Oh, I could scratch the eyes out of that wicked Miss Fredericks!"

"Was that why you were going to release her, Bert?" asked Marion in a relieved voice. "Oh, you dear boy! Do please forgive me! I might have known you had a good reason, but I was too upset to think of it."

"The note is written in Miss Ellis' handwriting," spoke up Captain Canfield. "Oh, I assure you that fellow McGillin is a wonderful mimic!"

"Did he confess?" asked Mrs. Burnside, in an eager voice.

"No; Miss Fredericks broke down and owned up to the whole thing, so she's a baby after all," was Bert's disgusted answer.

"I know some one else who was a baby, or a kid, or something on that order," laughed Miss Ellis, gayly. "Oh, Bert, the idea of your being taken in by the little treacherous creature! I heard you myself, you know, when you promised to give her money!"

"Rats! Why shouldn't I help a woman in distress, I'd like to know?" Bert retorted,

cheerfully. "How the deuce was I to know she hadn't been burned out of everything? I gave her a hundred dollars, and I'd have done the same for any one—the scrub woman, the laundress, or any one that needed it."

"Bert is not to blame. She lied to him," said Dr. Brookes, promptly. "He was only acting upon his usual generous impulses when he offered to help her. Any gentleman would have done the same if he could afford it."

"I do not blame Bert for that," said Captain Canfield, quickly; "but I am glad, indeed, that my son's reputation has been saved at the bank. Everything has been explained to them there, so his credit is all right, and I have also been able to keep the matter out of the papers. Bert has had a valuable experience, but we have recovered nearly two thousand dollars of the money. The girl, Miss Fredericks, had it hidden in her clothes."

"But which one of them was it that cashed the checks?" asked Miss Ellis, eagerly. "Was it that little minx, or her companion?"

"Barney is responsible for that, and he did it cleverly, too," spoke up the house detective. "That fellow has more disguises than you can shake a stick at. He is really very clever at imitating a woman."

"There's just one thing more," said Mrs. Burnside, thoughtfully. "Does any one know how Miss Fredericks got to that ball? I am just dying of curiosity to know how she did it."

Bert had already denied Miss Fredericks' story that he had agreed to take her to the ball. Miss Fredericks had told this yarn and had made Bert pose as her lover, feeling sure that Marion and her friends would not learn the truth until after the ball, when Miss Fredericks expected to be many miles away.

Dr. Brookes looked away from Marion's sweet face long enough to answer:

"Exactly what Mrs. Stetson asked me at four o'clock this morning, and then she set herself to work to discover how it was managed, and at nine she wrote me this startling bit of information: A sort of cousin of hers has been employed by Mrs. Stetson as chef for a little over a month. He gave his name as Fred Corley, and, of course, the fellow must have stolen the ticket, and so made it easy for Miss Fredericks to 'enter society.'"

"Well, she made about as mean an exit as she did entrance," said Bert, with a glance at Marion. "She came in via the cook and went out by way of a detective."

"Her ambition to see 'society' was her undoing," said Marion, soberly. "How stupid

of her to go to that ball, particularly when she had so successfully evaded all of the detectives."

"Criminals always do that," said the detective, quietly. "They are clever in ninety-nine things and idiots on the hundredth."

"And now she is in the station-house, and we have to do the rest," spoke up the doctor. "Now let us recapitulate briefly the evidence we have against her."

"She broke open my desk and extracted your letters, Bert, in order to copy the handwriting," said Marion, quickly. "The detective found her scissors, and they were badly scratched; besides, the point that was broken off in my desk fitted them exactly."

"And that is the letter you saw on her floor, I presume, Lena," remarked Bert, slyly; "and then you flew off on a tangent and sent me to purgatory!"

"Oh, Bert, I'm so sorry," was all Miss Ellis could say, and then the detective took up the thread of evidence.

"It seems she belongs to a gang of sharpers," he said, slowly; "but she had it in for McGillin, for some reason or other, and, after he had helped her to get that money, she did not do a thing but try and kill him. Luckily for him, he is poison proof from eating State's prison food for many years; still, I guess he'd have kicked if he had emptied the bottle."

"And she hasn't any uncle at all?" asked Marion, innocently.

"Barney posed as her uncle, I reckon," said the detective, grimly; "yet, when she came here she showed the clerk some excellent references; but then, you can never get to the bottom of the treachery in some women."

"Rats! The women are all right! Miss Fredericks is the only exception," laughed Bert; "and now, as everything is straight, I move that we adjourn this meeting. I haven't seen my sweetheart for a week, and—well, I guess you know my feelings!"

There was a general laugh, and the conference ended, the detective and Captain Canfield leaving the hotel together.

Miss Fredericks and Barney McGillin had separate trials, and, thanks to Captain Canfield's money and influence, the trials were conducted and ended quietly.

Both criminals went to jail for a term of years, and no one was the wiser except the small party of Bert's friends and admirers.

Bert had reinstated himself in the affections of all concerned, and, if anything, he and Miss Ellis were more closely united by this period of separation, which Miss Fredericks had forced upon them.

As for Marion, she had done what she could to straighten out the tangle, and now,

with the sunshine of love in her heart, she was fairly shedding beams of happiness upon all about her.

THE END.

Next week's MY QUEEN (No. 30) will contain "Under Lock and Key; or, Marion Marlowe's Last Rôle," in which the brave girl is lost to her friends through the machinations of an unscrupulous enemy, and finally experiences the happiest moment of her life.

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No. 2455—LADY'S FANCY WAIST.

This waist is very handsomely shown in red tucked silk and strong-colored lace.

The trimming portions might be made in velvet or plain silk instead of lace. The front can be made from plain or tucked material, the pattern being given plain without any allowance for tucks. Silk and light weight wools are appropriate for this style of waist.

The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 40 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 3 1-4 yards of 21-inch, or 1 5-8 yards of 42-inch material. As shown, 2 yards of all-over, 3-4 yard of tucking, and 1 piece of ribbon velvet.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, is well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps.

So many letters are being received by Miss Shirley requiring answers in this department that we shall have to ask our correspondents to limit their letters to 200 words, in order that all may be answered. STREET & SMITH.

I am a young girl of nineteen and have been keeping company with a young man of twenty-two for about a year and a half and we have agreed to be married in two years. We love each other very much, but mamma does not want me to go with him. She will never consent, so what shall I do—give up my lover to please her or not?

Seattle, Wash. AN ADMIRER OF MARION.

You do not tell us why your mother objects to your fiance. If there is a good reason for her disapproval we would advise you to take her advice, or at least wait until you have overcome her objections before you marry. Both you and your lover are young enough to be able to afford to wait for a few years, and this would be much preferable to going counter to your parent's wishes.

I have been going with a young man for two years, but there is another young man I used to go with five years ago, and he has asked me to go with him, and also wants to marry me. I am twenty-one years old. Do you think I had better keep to the one I am going with now? I like them both.

Philadelphia, Pa. CLARRIE S.

You do not say that you have any deep affection for either of these men, so we would advise you to marry neither one of them. There is no reason why you cannot continue the acquaintance of both of them upon a friendly basis. Do not think of marriage with any man unless you are sure that you love him. Matrimony is a very serious matter and true, constant affection is the only thing that will make married life a success.

I am a young man of twenty-one years, and I have just received a letter from a girl that I met at a party. She made a date with me, and at the time we met she made another date, and talked as though she wanted to keep steady company with me. Do you think she is in love with me or do you think she just wants somebody to go with?

Chicago, Ill. GEORGE R.

It depends entirely upon the character of the young lady. If she was forward in making your acquaintance and the engagements you mention, it is possible that she desired an escort and thought you would prove a desirable one. If the acquaintance was continued at your own request, we see no reason to doubt her sincerity. There is no reason, George, for supposing that a young lady is "in love" with you because she sees you frequently and writes you an occasional letter. Possibly, she desires only a good friend; and, if this is the case, we trust that you will prove one to her.

I am nineteen years old and am at present corresponding with a young man in New York, but of late he has not been so punctual in writing; in fact, I have not heard from him in over a week. Before he left me he asked me to be true to him, and I have

not gone with any other young man since. All my friends advise me to give him up, but I just hate to.

Orange, N. J.

GENEVIEVE M. D.

Perhaps there is some good reason why you have not heard from your correspondent. He may be away or engrossed with business cares, so that he cannot write you as frequently as before. If you are positive that it is due to neglect and that he is becoming tired of the correspondence, there is no reason why you should not accept the attentions and companionship of other men.

I am a young girl of sixteen years and have been going with a young man for a year, but through the enmity of a girl friend we had a falling out, and he turned his attention to another girl. Of late he has returned to me, and I am aware that he thinks as much of me as the latter. Please advise me if you would encourage him again, as I think a great deal of him.

LIZZIE D.

C—, N. J.

If you really care for the young man and are convinced that his regard for you is sincere, we see no reason why you should not enjoy his society. We do not advise you to go out of your way to encourage him, as it is possible that you may have another quarrel and, if you do, it would not be pleasant for you to remember that you took any especial pains to attract him. Continue your acquaintance upon a perfectly friendly basis, for the present, and do not allow the question of affection to enter into it.

I am writing to you for advice on a very serious matter. I am sixteen years old and am not allowed to keep company with anybody. Do you think I would be doing wrong to do this without my mother knowing it?

E. B. C.

K—, Ill.

We would certainly advise you not to "keep company" with any one without your mother's knowledge or against her wishes. You are very young to be spending much time thinking about men and would do far better if you confined your attention to your studies for a few years and endeavored to fit yourself for a useful, helpful womanhood. There will be plenty of men in the world five years from now, and you will be much better fitted to enjoy their society then than you are now.

I am eighteen years old and am very fond of the boys, and there are a good many of them after me. One young man, a blonde, has asked me to marry him; but I don't love him. In fact, I don't love any of them. Do you think I ought to go with young men or not?

L. F. H. H.

C—, N. J.

We see no reason why you should not enjoy the society of young men in moderation. It is not well for any girl of your age to spend too much of her time thinking about men, but the society of the opposite sex will be found pleasant and enjoyable if you use good judgment in the choice of your companions. Do not marry any man unless you love him. Real, true love is the only basis upon which to enter into married life with safety. A marriage based upon any other motive is apt to prove unhappy.

I am much interested in the Marion Marlowe series, and want to ask if you think neighbors have any cause to interfere because a husband agrees to obey his wife? My wife is several years older than I am, and when we were married I promised her on my knees to obey her, and she helps me every way possible to keep my pledge. She has cured me of several bad habits. Although it seemed difficult at first to mind, I now believe it is a good idea to obey a good woman.

BERT W. T.

C—, Mass.

You must be a pretty poor specimen of a man to find it necessary to put yourself under the discipline of your wife. Counsel which a woman gives her husband is one thing, and perfectly praiseworthy; but tacit obedience, such as you say you

render your wife, is quite another. We cannot understand any self-respecting woman marrying you. Why don't you brace up—do what is right and try and deserve your wife's respect?

I am twenty years of age and have recently become engaged to a young man whom I love dearly. He also shows his love for me, but there are many things about him which I do not like. My father tells me these will be all forgotten after we are married, but I do not think so. Please tell me which of us is right.

New York, N. Y.

LENA L.

We doubt very much whether anything that you object to now will become less objectionable after marriage. The close associations of married life are apt to impress the qualities of one's husband or wife upon us much more strongly than before marriage. If they are objectionable qualities, it will be just so much harder to avoid them. We would advise you to think the matter over very seriously before you marry.

I am twenty-two years old, but do not look over nineteen. I am called pretty, but am slightly lame. Some people notice it, but others do not. I have quite a number of friends, but I never have had a steady fellow. Do you think it is on account of my lameness? Would that make any difference if any of them really cared for me? Perhaps it is because I am distant and do not go around to dances or any place without my parents' consent, and they are very particular.

SORROWFUL.

Lowell, Mass.

If your lameness is so slight, it is probably no detriment to you. Any one who really cares for you would not think of it for a moment. Do not be in a hurry to have a "steady fellow." If you are slow to choose, perhaps you may choose the better in the end. A little delay now may result in a better class of acquaintances later on.

Can you tell me how to find out if a man is sincere or not, and is it proper for a girl to kiss a boy good night when he leaves her after seeing her home from a dance, if they are not engaged or have no intentions of being? Do you think a girl of seventeen knows her own mind? I think she does. Is it improper or right to marry a man ten years your senior? Please keep that book going forever.

Providence, R. I.

RUBY.

You will have to judge by the man's actions whether he is sincere. We do not approve of promiscuous kissing. A girl should retain her favors for her fiancé or husband. There are many girls of seventeen who do not know their own minds and a few who do. It depends upon the girl. We see nothing improper in a girl marrying a man ten years her senior, provided she loves him and he loves her. This is the main qualification for marriage, and we do not advise marriage without it, no matter what the ages.

A nice young man (as I thought him to be) courted me for five months. Later I heard he was married. He did not deny it and said he didn't court me out of harm, but because he loved me so well. His wife was sick and he begged me to go and see her, and I found her to be lonely. Since I met her I do not notice him. Is it right to go and see her, or do you think he is under the impression that it is him I go to see?

W. SARAH M.

Pittsburg, Pa.

This man seems to be utterly without principle. No married man has any right or excuse to "court" another woman. We would advise you to dispense with his acquaintance entirely and not give him a chance to think that you desire to see him. Since you have found his wife so lonely an individual, we see no reason why you cannot continue her acquaintance, and perhaps you can in a quiet way assist her in keeping her husband at home so that she will have the attention which she deserves and which he seems to want to show to other women. Do not allow his tales of "love" to affect you for an in-

stant. Love must carry respect with it in order to be of any value, and no man shows you respect if he makes love to you while he is wedded to another woman.

My mother will not allow me to go with young girls and boys. I am sixteen years old and go to school, and after school when I get home I have to do the work, get supper, and on Saturday I have to help with the washing. Even on Sunday she is not willing to let me go out. I have a sister who is a school teacher and she never makes her do a thing. I think that I should be allowed to go out sometimes or to have respectable company.

L. V. V.

Buffalo, N. Y.

We presume your sister may keep the household in other ways than simply working. You are young yet, and a few years spent closely at home will not hurt you. We know that housework is not always pleasant, but it will help you to know how to take care of a home of your own some day. Ask your mother to let you have companions of your own age come and see you when you are not busy, and we have no doubt that she will consent.

I am a young lady of nineteen and have been keeping company with a young man for some time. Often he stays away and I do not know the cause, for he says he loves me, and when he comes back he gives no reason for his absence. He has done this often, and between times I have been with other friends. I think perhaps if I had been true to them and not given them up every time he came back that I would have steady company, but I feel that I love him more than any one else. I would like to know if I should let my love grow cold toward him. He has told me that his intentions were to marry me, but he acts strangely once in a while, and it only keeps me worrying about him. He knows that I have stopped going around with any one but him, so it makes me feel downhearted to go out alone. I cannot go back to any of my old friends now, for there would be talk.

MARTHA D.

Philadelphia, Pa.

If you feel that you are "being made a fool of," we cannot understand how you can continue to love. Your self-respect should control your heart. If you are engaged to this young man, he ought certainly to give you some reason for his absences. On the other hand, perhaps he is only thoughtless and does not realize that he is giving you cause for worry. We would advise you to talk the matter over with him calmly and explain that you feel that you cannot afford to give up friends who treat you with consideration for one who apparently fails to appreciate you. If he really loves you, he will not neglect you.

I am a young lady twenty years old. I wish to ask your opinion concerning a young man's actions toward me. He works in a large store near my home, and whenever I go in there he just stares and laughs at me, and he also tries to enter into conversation with me. As I do not care for him I will not talk to him, but he will insist upon laughing at me, and it makes me feel very uncomfortable, as I imagine he is making fun of me. Do you think he is?

PASSY O.

Paterson, N. J.

Do not concern yourself about this young man's foolish actions. The sooner you show that his ungentlemanly behavior does not affect you the sooner he will cease his nonsense. If you have no big brother to visit upon him the punishment he deserves, then convince him by your demeanor that you consider him beneath your notice.

I am a girl of seventeen and go to various dances and am also a member of a club where we have dances and receptions. One gentleman in particular belonging to the same club, always dances with me there but when he met me at a public dance he did not engage a single dance with me. I afterward met him at the club dance, and he wanted to dance with me, but I refused him. I did not tell him the reason why, but I think he must have heard it, for he did not speak to me after that. Kindly ad-

vise me what to do, for I do not like to have any enemies.
Cleveland, O. PEARL S. K.

We doubt whether the gentleman is an enemy of yours. He probably felt that you had "turned him down," and realized that he deserved it to an extent. Should he speak to you again or attempt to discuss the matter, explain to him plainly that you felt that you were entitled to as much attention at a public affair as at the club dances.

I am a girl of eighteen, and I have to go to the dentist quite often, as I am having my teeth filled. The second time I went he put his arms about my waist, and I said to him: "Familiarity breeds contempt." He said that I must not be so proud, but I told him that I did not like such liberties. When I went again he spoke to me very roughly. Don't you think I did right? I told some of my friends and they said I thought too much of myself. I had never seen the dentist before.
Brooklyn, N. Y. BEATRICE S.

We advise you to select another dentist, who is a gentleman. The man who will take advantage of the seclusion of his operating room to insult a woman profanes his manhood and his profession. Have you no parents or relatives who would punish this scoundrel as he deserves? You did perfectly right to insist upon being treated with respect, and the "friends" who criticised you for your action are poor friends.

I like Marlon Marlowe very much, and, oh, I am so glad you have made your heroine an actress and then declared you were endeavoring to make her an ideal woman. You could not possibly have paid a greater tribute to the stage and its women.

But, Miss Shirley, do not make Marlon marry any one, not even the fascinating Archie Ray, for, to me (and I have studied the question again and again) an ideal woman could never be anything but an unmarried woman. As soon as a woman marries she loses all the chances of being "ideal" that she ever possessed.
Cleveland, O. INDIA L.

We are very glad you like Marion so much. There are women in all walks of life who closely approach the ideal of womanhood. They exist upon the stage, as well as in other walks of life. Some of the stage favorites to-day have a home life that is unusually sweet. The ideal woman will not, however, fall from her pinnacle if she marries. There is such a thing as an ideal married life, and both men and women are happier under such circumstances than they can possibly be under any other. It is unfortunate that these cases are so rare, but, perhaps, as the race progresses, they will increase.

Do you think it is right for a young lady to sit on a gentleman's lap in company, providing there are no vacant seats in the room? Is it proper for a lady having an escort to go to a party without letting him know before hand?
Cleveland, O. R. G. B.

We do not think it right or proper for a lady to sit upon a gentleman's lap under these circumstances. A true gentleman would give you his seat and stand himself. Such deportment is most unladylike, and we hope you will not even consider it hereafter. If you accept a gentleman's invitation to accept his escort to a party, you ought not to go without him, unless he is unable to accompany you.

I am a young lady of seventeen, and two gentlemen call on me regularly. One of them is nineteen and the other twenty. The younger I like best and he has asked to keep steady company with me. Shall I allow him to?
Cleveland, O. D. R. G.

You are too young to think of keeping steady company with any one. Have all the friends and acquaintances you wish that are congenial and worthy of your society, but do not confine yourself to any one man. Such a course at your age will only interfere with the formation of your character and the development of your intellect.

I am a young lady seventeen years of age, and my parents object to my having gentlemen callers. Do you think I am too young? I have many acquaintances, and when I go to a dance am very popular and it makes me angry to think that every time I go to a dance or to the theatre I am obliged to go with my brother, when I have plenty of offers from other young men. Is it wrong to attend a dance with your brother and then have some one else accompany you home? My mother advised me to write you, and whatever you think best she intends to do. My brother also wishes your advice. He is nineteen years old and wishes to know whether you think him too young to call upon lady acquaintances and take them to places of amusement?
Chicago, Ill. PANSY H.

We think that it would be just as well if you refrained from cultivating men acquaintances for a few years more. You are quite young, and, since your brother is so obliging, we would advise you to accept his escort. When you are a little older, you will be better able to judge which of the men who show you attention are really appreciative of your society, and this is probably your mother's idea. An escort to a dance is necessarily the escort from one, and it would not be polite for you to accept the escort of another gentleman to your home unless your brother requests it and your parents sanction such an arrangement. We would advise your brother not to spend too much time with lady acquaintances. Companionship with the opposite sex should be indulged in with moderation. A young man of his age, as a rule, is quite as well off spending his evenings on a bicycle or at a bowling alley.

I am a young man twenty-one years of age and have considerable money. I am truly in a fix. I have been keeping company with several young ladies and two of them have proposed to me, and I have accepted their offers, but I love a third one the best, but she has not spoken of marriage to me. I have tried in vain to break these engagements, but they both threaten to sue me for breach of promise, and I am nearly crazy over this trouble. Shall I take a jump into the Chicago River, or skip the country? It is either one or the other, and I anxiously await your reply to this letter before I decide my fate.
Chicago, Ill. PETE S.

The Chicago girls must be more impressionable than we have always understood they were or you must be a direct descendant of Adonis. We are sorry for you, Pete. It must be an awful fate to be so attractive. Instead of jumping into the Chicago River, you might go up in a balloon and from a safe distance watch the fair contestants battle for each other's scalp and your hand.

I go to dances a good deal, and really love a man I meet at them. He is very good to me, and dances with me a good deal, but never takes me home. There is another girl that thinks a good deal of him, but he never looks at her until it is time to go home, and then he goes home with her. Which of us does he like the best?
Cleveland, O. EMMA G.

We would judge that the man in question preferred your dancing, but the other girl's society. Probably she is not as good a dancer as you are. Do not spend any love upon a man whom you only meet in public and whose actions do not indicate that he desires your companionship. When a man shows you plainly that he thinks more of you at all times than he does of other women it will be time enough to consider whether you care for him.

On Christmas Eve a young man whom I have known several years and for whom I have the greatest respect, came to call on me. A large sprig of mistletoe hung from the chandelier in the hall, and as he was leaving I must have stood under it, for he suddenly stooped and kissed me without making any explanation. I feel that he owes me an apology and I shall demand it. If he should call again, how shall I conduct myself? This is the first attempt at "spooning" he has ever made, and he has always appeared to be simply a kind, sensible friend.
Minneapolis, Minn. LUCILLE F.

The young man took advantage of the privilege universally accorded by custom. We cannot see why he should owe you an apology. If you did not want to run the risk of having a young man kiss you "under the mistletoe" you should not have had any in the house. The next time he comes to call upon you we should advise you to treat him exactly the same as before. He certainly deserves no punishment for taking advantage of the opportunity you provided.

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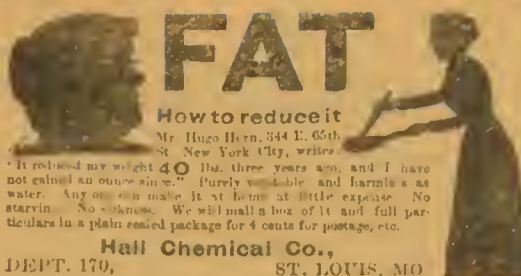
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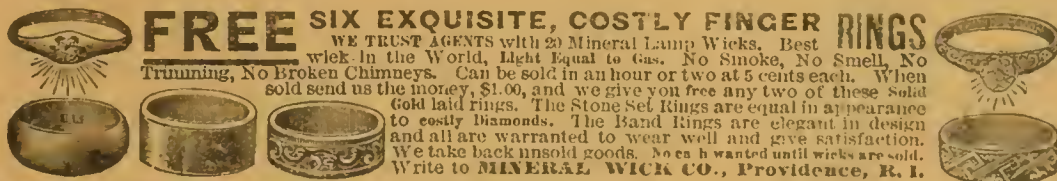
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THE CHEERFUL IDIOT AND THE GLUM DYSPEPTIC.

The cheerful idiot is the individual who when he sees you come into the house dripping from the storm inquires pleasantly, "Is it raining?" If you were whittling and the knife slipped and cut off the top of a finger he would say just as pleasantly, "Did you cut yourself?" It seems the chief business in the life of the cheerful idiot to ask fool questions. Mostly people put up with him as they do with mosquitoes—because they can't help themselves. But once in a while the cheerful idiot runs up against the wrong man. It was that way when the C. I. of the boarding house tackled a miserable looking fellow-boarder who was tortured by dys-



pepsia. "Hello, Smith," he cried, "aren't you feeling well?" And Smith growled back: "It's none of your business how I'm feeling."

Talk about adding insult to injury! What could be any worse than asking a man who had suffering stomped all over him, "Aren't you feeling well?"

It's rather hard for the dyspeptic to make a stranger to the disease understand just how much suffering dyspepsia can cause. Words don't express it. That terrible gnawing sensation in the stomach is past description. Even after you have recited the specific aches and pains, there are no terms to express the cumulative and combined effects of them all upon both mind and body.

DON'T CULTIVATE DYSPEPSIA.

That would seem unnecessary advice, yet it is a fact that in the main, people who finally become dyspeptics seem to have studied how quickest to bring on the disease. They eat irregularly. They eat unwholesome or innutritious foods. They eat heartily when they are tired with a day's work and the stomach needs rest instead of exercise. In fact, if they made a study of the quickest way to dyspepsia or disease of the stomach in general, and its allied

organs of digestion and nutrition, they could not practice more successful methods.

When dyspepsia once has its grip on the stomach the man who has experimented with tablets and powders and other palliatives without permanent relief finds himself asking the question, "Am I ever going to be well again so that I can eat with appetite and enjoyment?"

The one necessity to the recovery of health is the cure of the diseases of the stomach and other organs of digestion and nutrition.

HOW DYSPEPSIA IS CURED.

There is an almost certain cure for dyspepsia and other diseases of the stomach and organs of digestion and nutrition. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery always helps, and almost always cures. In ninety-eight per cent. of cases in which the "Discovery" has been given a fair and faithful trial it has wrought a perfect and permanent cure. It has cured the most severe and obstinate conditions of stomach trouble which have failed to yield to any other medicine.

Mr. Ned Nelson, the Irish Comedian and Mimic, of 577 Royden Street, Camden, N. J., writes: "We fulfilled an engagement of twelve weeks and the constant traveling gave me a bad touch of that dreaded disease called dyspepsia. I had tried everything possible to cure it till last week while playing at B. F. Keath's Bijou Theatre, Philadelphia, in the Nelson Trio, a professional friend of mine advised me to try Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. I tried it, and, thank God, with good result."

"For three years I suffered untold agony," writes Mrs. H. R. White, of Stanstead, Stanstead Co., Quebec (Box 115). "I would have spells of trembling and being sick at my stomach, pain in right side all the time; then it would work up into my stomach, and—such distress it is impossible to describe. I wrote to the World's Dispensary Medical Association, stating my case to them, and they very promptly answered and told me what to do. I took eight bottles of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and five vials of Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. Thanks to Dr. Pierce and his medicine I am a well woman to-day. Dr. Pierce's medicines also cured my mother of liver complaint from which she had been a sufferer for fifteen years. We highly recommend these medicines to all suffering people."

Some dealers desiring to make the little more profit paid by the sale of less meritorious medicines will sometimes offer the customer a substitute for "Golden Medical Discovery," claiming it to be "just as good." Nothing is just as good for you which has not just as good a record of cures, and no other medicine has a record of cures comparable with those effected by the use of "Golden Medical Discovery."

GIVE IT TO SOME ONE ELSE.

Dr. Pierce's Common Sense Medical Adviser, containing over a thousand large pages and more than 700 illustrations is sent free on receipt of stamps to pay expense of mailing only. If you don't feel the need of this valuable medical work yourself, why not give it to some friend or young married couple. It is an invaluable gift, and one which will be highly appreciated by the recipient. Send 21 one-cent stamps for the volume in durable cloth-binding, or only 21 stamps for the book in paper covers. Address Dr. R. V. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y.

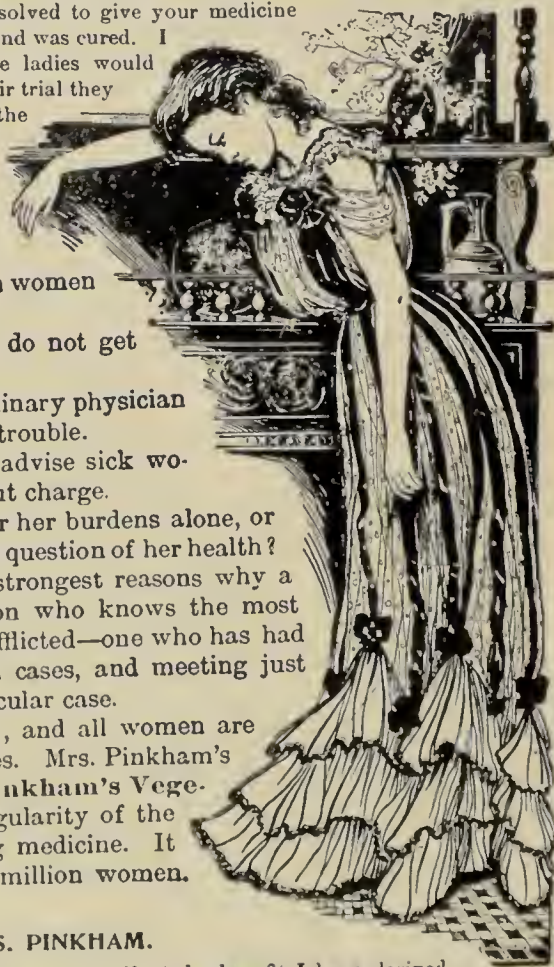
The Trials of Women



MISS EMMA SAIDT

MISS SAIDT WRITES MRS. PINKHAM A GRATEFUL LETTER.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—Will you kindly allow me the pleasure of expressing my gratitude for the wonderful relief I have experienced by taking **Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound**? I suffered for a long time with nervous prostration and general debility, caused by falling of the womb. It seemed as though my back would never cease aching. I could not sleep. I had dull headaches. I was weary all the time and life was a burden to me. I sought the seashore for relief, but all in vain. On my return I resolved to give your medicine a trial. I took two bottles and was cured. I can cheerfully state, if more ladies would only give your medicine a fair trial they would bless the day they saw the advertisement, and there would be happier homes. I mean to do all I can for you in the future. I have you alone to thank for my recovery, for which I am very grateful."—MISS EMMA SAIDT, Jobstown, N. J.



The homes of this country are filled with women whose trials seem too hard to bear.

They have some feminine disorder and do not get relief.

Frequently it is not possible for the ordinary physician to understand the fundamental cause of the trouble.

The one person who is best qualified to advise sick women is Mrs. Pinkham, and she does it without charge.

Why then should any woman try to bear her burdens alone, or trust to inexperienced hands the complicated question of her health?

Every one will agree that these are the strongest reasons why a woman who is ill should appeal to a person who knows the most about the kind of illness with which she is afflicted—one who has had the greatest experience in treating just such cases, and meeting just the symptoms that are manifest in her particular case.

Mrs. Pinkham's address is Lynn, Mass., and all women are invited to write freely to her of their troubles. Mrs. Pinkham's great medicine for women is **Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound**. Every illness or irregularity of the female organs will be helped by this sterling medicine. It has restored to health already more than a million women.

MRS. MUELLER'S HAPPY LETTER TO MRS. PINKHAM.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—It affords me great pleasure to tell of the benefit I have derived from the use of your remedies.

"I was greatly troubled with my menstrual periods, was very weak and nervous, could not work at all. I have taken several bottles of **Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound**, also used the **Liver Pills** and **Sanative Wash**, and am wonderfully improved in health. My neighbors are all surprised to see me out and doing my own work.

"I would advise every suffering woman to try **Lydia E. Pinkham's remedies**."
—MRS. HENRY MUELLER, 543 McAlpine Ave., Clifton, Cincinnati, O.



MRS. HENRY MUELLER

\$5,000 Reward.

We have deposited with the National City Bank of Lynn, Mass., \$5,000, which will be paid to any person who can show that the above testimonial letters are not genuine or were published before obtaining the writers' special permission — **LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO.**, Lynn, Mass.